

# THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1896.

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## THE MISTRESS OF BRAE FARM.

BY ROSA NOUCHETTE CAREY.

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### CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN ANGEL UNAWARES.

LORRAINE soon found that Ellison's absence gave her so much to do that she rarely had an unoccupied minute in the day, and her evening walks were always to some cottage where sickness or trouble called for neighbourly help and sympathy. The villagers were becoming very much attached to her, and "our Mrs. Herbert" was quite as often on their lips as "the mistress up at Brae."

Lorraine did not meet Colonel Trevor for some days, but one afternoon, as she was starting for the village, she came upon him. Some workmen were putting up some new fencing in the Brae meadow, and Gavin was superintending them. When he saw Mrs. Herbert he left them, and walked on a little with her. She thought he looked unusually grave, and even a little careworn, and at once guessed the reason. His first words proved she was right.

"I am glad to have met you," he said at once. "I was thinking of coming down to the farm to have a talk. My mother tells me that you have been sitting with her." And then he turned to her and said, a little abruptly, "She does not seem quite so well to-day. I have been asking her to have Dr. McCallum down."

"Oh no, there is no need for that," returned Lorraine quickly. "I should not propose that again if I were you, it only makes your mother nervous. Mrs. Trevor is really no worse than she was a week ago."

"How are we to know that?" he returned doubtfully. "Anyhow, I wish Dr. Howell to come regularly. I am afraid my insisting on it has upset her a bit. I don't know how it is," he continued, in a vexed

voice, "even a sensible woman like my mother is not always reasonable. I wish you would talk to her, Mrs. Herbert. She thinks no end of what you say."

"Gavin is so good to me," Mrs. Trevor said to her the next day, almost tearfully. "Really he reminds me of his father sometimes. John was so gentle when he thought there was anything really the matter. He makes a point of my seeing Dr. Howell once or twice a week, so I suppose I must give in to him."

One afternoon things had not gone so smoothly as usual. One batch of visitors after another had called at Brae Farm and had stayed so long that Lorraine had been unable to pay her usual visit to Mrs. Trevor, and this omission weighed heavily on her mind. She had also been obliged to send Nora away without her music lesson, and to add to her perplexities Dorcas had a bilious attack, and Ruth had to attend to Tedo, and bring up more than one relay of freshly-brewed tea.

Lorraine tried to keep her boy with her while she entertained her visitors, but the little fellow was restless and clamoured for his play-room and rocking-horse, and he was so fretful she was obliged to let him go.

As soon as the Mordaunts took their departure Lorraine gave a quick sigh of relief; she was tired of the long gossiping afternoon, and longing to breathe the sweet evening air. She even felt a momentary vexation when a tall shadow passed the window, and she recognised Colonel Trevor's grey tweed. He had ridden down the Stony Lane, as they called it, on his way from Darley Mill, and had stopped at the Farm as he passed.

He gave a quick glance at Lorraine's face as he shook hands.

"How tired you look, Mrs. Herbert! Have those boys been plaguing you all the afternoon?"

"What boys do you mean?" she asked, rather surprised at this. "Yes, I do feel a little jaded. The Mordaunts have been here; Mrs. Mordaunt and Amy and Constance and Mrs. Turner and Mrs. Earnshaw. Oh, and Laura Holt, too, and it tired me rather, feeling that your mother would be expecting me."

"Oh, you must not let my mother be a burden!" he returned. "I saw that young scamp Hugo racing down the farm-yard some time ago with Edmund at his heels, and I thought they might have been bothering you."

"Oh no; they are always here!" And then a thought suddenly occurred to her. "Where did you say you saw them, Colonel Trevor?" she asked anxiously, for she remembered all at once that Daniel had gone to Bramfield to see his brother, who was ill, and that at this hour Ellison had forbidden the boys to be in the farm-yard.

Colonel Trevor was just going to answer, when Ruth appeared at the door with a puzzled expression upon her face.

"If you please, ma'am, I cannot find Master Tedo anywhere. I

have been looking for him and calling him for the last ten minutes, so I thought he must have run down to you again."

"Oh no; he is only hiding for fun! Have you looked in my big cupboard, Ruth? He has made himself a little cubby-house there. If you will excuse me a moment, Colonel Trevor, I will soon find him." But as Lorraine turned towards the house they heard a frightened scream from the direction of the farm-yard, and Lady Alice put back her glossy ears and strained at her bridle in alarm; even Bairn gave a hoarse bark, as though he scented mischief.

"What can that be?" exclaimed Lorraine, turning a little pale; but before she and Gavin could reach the gate where Lady Alice was still plunging, Eddie rushed up to them, his teeth chattering and his eyes wide with terror.

"Oh, do come—do come!" he screamed. "Tedo has fallen into the pond and Hughie can't get him out!"

Lorraine uttered a cry of uncontrollable anguish; it haunted Gavin long afterwards. Sometimes between sleeping and waking he would fancy he heard it again, and start up from his pillows. Her grey, terror-stricken face would be before him as she passed him and flew towards the pond. Quickly as he followed her he was not in time to prevent her rushing into the water. She was standing up to her waist, and in another instant would have waded up to her neck if he had not caught hold of her and drawn her back.

"Leave him to me; I shall have him in a moment!" he shouted. But he only spoke to deaf ears; even when he laid the dripping inanimate child in her arms, she only stood there with the water reaching to her knees, clasping him to her bosom as though her terror had bereft her of reason.

There was a small crowd round the pond by this time; the dogs were barking and racing in and out of the water, and Hugo, crying piteously, was being shaken by Joe Brand with no light hand.

"He promised he would only look and not move," sobbed the boy. "I was holding him on the fence; I had tight hold, and then something cold touched my leg and startled me. It was only the old brown cow, but I jumped and let go for an instant, and Tedo fell, and it was deep, and I could not see him for a moment; and—and if he is drowned I would like to be drowned too."

"Bring him at once to the house, Mrs. Herbert; we must lose no time."

Gavin's clear authoritative tones roused Lorraine. There was something to be done then; the ice round her heart and brain seemed to thaw. She went to the house as quickly as her wet garments would allow her to move, followed by the weeping Ruth and Eunice. Gavin waited only to tell Joe Brand to ride off for Dr. Howell, then he bade Mrs. Tucker heat water and flannels, and followed the women up-stairs.

"You must let me help," he said quietly. "I know all that there

is to be done, and we will do it before Dr. Howell comes. Get off his wet things. Yes, that is right. Let me have that blanket to wrap him in. Now you must rub his limbs upwards, while I try to bring him to consciousness."

Lorraine gave him no trouble; she followed his instructions, doing things as she was told with a meek obedience that went to his heart; but he could hardly trust himself to look at her. She had refused to leave the room or change her wet clothes. "When Tedo wakes I will do it," she said, and he could not compel her to go; he could only contrive that she should be kept doing something; but long before Dr. Howell arrived, he knew that all their efforts would be fruitless.

In vain they wrapped him in hot blankets and applied water-bottles to the little body. In vain did Gavin strive to restore the child's breathing by artificial means, or to promote circulation by rubbing his limbs; not even a feeble beat of the pulse or a single breath repaid his efforts; in his opinion life had been extinct when he first placed the boy in his mother's arms; but he dared not acknowledge this.

When Dr. Howell entered the room—Joe Brand had happily met him on his way to Brae House—the two men exchanged a look. Dr. Howell took matters into his own hands.

"You must leave me alone with the patient for a few minutes," he said decidedly. "Colonel Trevor may remain. He is an old soldier and will be useful. No, Mrs. Herbert"—as she turned her white, imploring face to him—"you cannot help me until you have taken off those wet clothes; then you may come back. Take her away, Mrs. Tucker," and before Lorraine knew what had happened she was outside the door; and Mrs. Tucker, like a sensible, motherly woman, had led her away.

Ruth had already been rummaging in the wardrobe for some dry clothes. She had acted on a hint from Colonel Trevor, and Lorraine was at last persuaded to put them on. It was high time, for her teeth were chattering with cold; but she refused at first to drink the cup of hot tea that Eunice brought her, until Dr. Howell took it into his own hands again.

"I will not keep you here," he returned gravely, "but I should like to tell you something before you go back." Then for the first time in her life fierce unreasoning terror and rebellion took possession of her soul. She put out her hands as though to keep the doctor at bay, and then put them to her ears. "No, no—I will listen to nothing," she said, and before he could say another word, she had walked into the next room.

When Colonel Trevor heard Lorraine's footsteps, he did not move, but put out his hand to her. He was still standing by the bed; but all vestiges of the last hour's work had been removed. There was a straitness about the childish form, and a waxen whiteness on the

tiny face that told their own tale. The yellowish curls still clung damply to the temples, waiting for the mother's hand to brush them away ; but though she grasped the fatal truth, no second cry of anguish passed Lorraine's lip, the iron grip at her throat almost strangled her. She stood there by Gavin's side unconscious that he held her hand, or that Dr. Howell was speaking.

"He did not suffer, my dear Mrs. Herbert—not an instant. Something must have stunned him, for he was not long in the water—not long enough to drown him."

Then Lorraine startled them both.

"How did it happen?" she asked, in the dull level tone of one past feeling, and she looked at Gavin. She had made no attempt to touch her boy, though he lay there beside her with a solemn baby smile on his lips. One cold hand pushed back her hair as she put the question, but her eyes awed him by their still agony.

He looked at the doctor in some perplexity, but Dr. Howell motioned him to speak. "Mrs. Herbert wishes to know ; it will not hurt her. Tell her what you know yourself, Colonel."

"It is a terrible business. They ought never to have been allowed to play near the pond. The boy ran out, none of the maids saw him ; Hugo and Eddie were sailing their boats on the pond, and he begged to stay. Hugo let him climb up the fence and sit there ; he says he was holding him, but something startled him and he let go, and Tedo fell into the pond. It is deep near the fence, and we think there must have been a stone, for he sank, and——"

"Yes, I understand ; and there is nothing more to be done."

"Nothing—nothing !"

"Thank you—thank you both"—and then her breath came a little quickly. "Please let me have my turn now. I must be alone with my boy."

Again Gavin appealed for instructions, and again Dr. Howell bowed his head ; and the two men went out softly together and closed the door behind them.

For a moment Lorraine did not stir, she seemed listening to the retreating footsteps. Then she looked down at her left hand, as though she wondered what that red mark across it meant, and then her tearless eyes rested on her boy ; and a slow quivering of her muscles showed the enforced calm was at an end.

"Tedo, Tedo," she whispered, and then she lay down on the bed and took the little body in her arms, and pressed her face against the soft curls. But even then she shed no tear ; only her strong convulsive sobs shook the bed.

"Do not hold him too tightly ; I had a treasure too, and I lost it." Did those words come to Lorraine as she kept her bitter vigil that night ?

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## A PAINFUL ENIGMA.

"I MUST go to her, Gavin. No—do not try to keep me ; in some cases it is one's duty not to think of one's self ;" and Mrs. Trevor's fine face was drawn with anxiety, and she clasped her hands nervously as she looked at her son. The moment the terrible news had reached her, she had asked for the little grey silk hood that she always wore in the garden, and he had found her tying it with tremulous fingers.

"Mother dear," he said, sitting down beside her, "you must not do this—you are not fit ; it would only do you harm."

And then she had made her pitiful little protest. Three or four hours had elapsed since the fatal accident, but the servants at Brae had only just carried the news to their mistress.

"I must go, Gavin. Would you have me leave that poor thing alone, with Ellison away, and no one but servants in the house?"

"She does not feel her loneliness," he returned, with a quick contraction of his brows, as though some remembrance suddenly stabbed him ; "she will not leave the child—nothing will induce her. Howell is going there now ; he says the shock has stunned her, and that she does not take things in. She is quiet and listens to everything, but he doubts whether she really understands ; the servants say it is dreadful to see her lying there fondling the child, and taking no notice of them. Howell says he shall be firm and put a stop to it ; he means to give her a sedative of some sort ; he does not like her state—she is too quiet, and she has not shed a tear."

Gavin was walking up and down as he said this, but Mrs. Trevor only shook her head.

"How is she to cry, poor soul, when she has a ton weight just crushing her heart? Oh, I know all about it, Gavin, my dear ; that is why I want to go to her ! When your sisters died I hardly shed a tear for a week, but I was shedding them inwardly all the while. If I had gone on long in that state I should have died—the doctors said so ; but your father knew what to do, and he brought me round. John was always so clever !" She finished with a sigh, as though she were talking to herself.

Gavin felt a momentary surprise, it was so seldom that she ever mentioned his father to him ; something in her tone brought him back to her side, for in those days the mother and son seemed drawn closer together.

"Poor mother, you have had your troubles !" he said, taking her hand. The many-coloured brilliants, twinkling and flashing, could not conceal that the fingers were strangely wasted. "I wonder if I

dare trust you?" he continued anxiously. "Mother, are you sure that you are honest with me, and that it will not really hurt you? Shall I ask Howell? I am going down there directly to meet him."

"For pity's sake, no, Gavin," she returned in alarm. "Doctors are all very well, but one may have too much of them sometimes; besides"—with a return of her old quaintness—"I am not sure that I should obey him or you either. My boy," she continued woefully, "do you know what often troubles me when I sit alone? It is the thought how little I have done for other people. When one looks back over one's life and counts the blessings and the undeserved mercies, it makes one so terribly ashamed sometimes; such a strong wish comes over me to do just a little more before I have quite finished with it all."

Gavin nodded; he could understand that; it appealed to his man's reason. If he had not done good work in his day—if he had not felt that his life had benefited his fellow-creatures, he would not have regained strength and cheerfulness. His mother was right, and he would not keep her back.

"Well, I must leave you now, mother, but I shall be back in an hour's time and will see what is to be done;" and then he went out into the sweet summer darkness and walked across the dewy meadow and through the silent farm-yard, and then he paced patiently up and down the garden-path until the doctor joined him.

Never since his own trouble had Gavin felt so profoundly agitated; it was not so much pity for the baby-life quenched so suddenly, though the child's engaging ways had won his heart, as an overwhelming sense of what this meant to the mother.

What had she done to deserve this bitter trial? All her life she had tried to help people, and her reward was this, that a mysterious Providence—Providence?—ah, it is to be feared that Gavin used another word—had taken her one treasure, her all. The widow's mite had not been proffered. What human mother would desire to lose her only child? But in Lorraine Herbert's case the furnace of affliction was heated seven-fold. Few mothers loved their little ones more intensely. Lorraine's heart had never belonged to her worthless husband, and all her wealth of affection had been poured on her child. Ordinary as he might be to others, he was priceless and precious in her eyes.

"It was so horribly unnecessary!" he said to himself, almost fiercely, as he plunged down the dark garden-paths. "If one could see any reason in slaughtering an innocent like that!" he muttered. Gavin did not mean to be profane, but from boyhood he had hated to see any weak helpless thing suffer; it absolutely tortured him to remember the young widow's face as she stood by his side looking down at her dead child. No word of complaint had crossed her lips, but he would rather that she had made any outcry than have stood in that statue-like stillness, with that look of despair in her eyes.

"How is a man to understand it?" he went on. "How could I understand it myself, when my darling Nell cried out that she wanted to stay with me, and not go out into the dark. I was an Agnostic for months afterwards, until the old padre got hold of me, and then somehow I began to see things differently. I wish I could solve this problem," he finished; and then the door opened and closed, and he hurried to meet the doctor.

"I am going to put up at the *Waggon and Horses* to-night," were Dr. Howell's first words. "I have had a hard day's work, and Brown Bess is fagged, and I am pretty well dog-tired myself." Now and then when he was belated, or master and mare were worn out, he would turn in at the *Waggon and Horses*, and he always enjoyed this return to bachelor habits. He had a good wife who never fussed him or herself unnecessarily.

"How is she now?" asked Gavin suddenly.

"Mrs. Herbert do you mean? She was asleep, or nearly so; I waited until the dose seemed inclined to make her drowsy. Well, we shall have tided over the night, but then I shall have reached my limits. 'Canst thou minister to a mind diseased?' I always say that to myself in such cases; the old bard had us on the hip there. Are you going farther with me, Colonel?"—for they had passed the gates of Brae by this time.

"Yes, I will see you through the Woodlands, and I shall be glad to have a bit of talk with you, for I never felt less inclined to turn in. I shall write to my cousin to-night. We must have her back as soon as possible."

"Oh, she will be sure to come as soon as she hears it," replied Dr. Howell. And then they talked a little about arrangements and various matters, until Gavin suddenly burst out again:

"Look here, doctor—I must have it out with somebody—does it not strike you that there is something horribly unnecessary in this afternoon's tragedy? What has a woman like Mrs. Herbert done that she should be bowled over in this way? Oh, I can't explain myself! But if one could only see the reason for such things."

"Ah, you may well call it a tragedy," returned the doctor. "I have not heard of such a thing happening since the day they found little Joan Sanderson in the brook. We need not wonder Mrs. Herbert is a bit dazed with the shock. It would have tried the strongest of us. We must just give her time, and leave her to nature a bit. If she could only have the relief of a good cry I should feel more comfortable about her. But Mrs. Herbert is young and healthy, and she will have a fight for it."

Gavin shuddered. He knew too well what such fights meant.

"If one could see the necessity for such suffering," he said again.

The iteration seemed to strike the doctor's ears, for he looked at his companion, but it was too dark to discern his expression.

"There is one thing I mean to tell her when she is able to bear

it," he said presently, "though just now it would be a doubtful consolation. That child's life was already doomed."

Gavin started. "You are quite sure of that, doctor?"

"I was sure of it the first moment I saw him, though I thought it better to keep my knowledge to myself. I could patch him up a bit, and the warm weather, though it made him languid, arrested the course of the disease; but he had no stamina, and the first childish ailment would have carried him off, even if——" Here the doctor paused.

"You are quite safe with me, Howell. Speak out plainly, man. It will be a relief to know what you feared."

"Well, he was the sort of child one dreaded would have brain disease—he was weak and excitable, and I always told his mother that he could not be kept too quiet. If she had seen some children suffer as I have, she would, barring the accident, be only too thankful to lose him so painlessly. To be sure, she might have kept him another year or two, but that would only have made the parting when it came harder to bear. Depend upon it, there is not only reason but mercy in this sudden accident."

Gavin drew a deep breath. There was consolation for him in the doctor's rough homely words.

"And there is another thing," and here Dr. Howell's voice grew a little solemn. "I don't know whether you have heard anything about his father—that is another bit of knowledge I kept to myself. A young brother of mine knew Ralph Herbert. He was an artist—oh, I am making no mistake, there could not be two of them. He was a handsome fellow, Gilbert said, and had a free hand; but a more vicious, sensual reprobate never lived. He had simply no sense of honour, and told lies with a facility that would have become the old gentleman."

"Poor woman," was Gavin's reply to this, and again the doctor's eyes tried to peer through the darkness.

"You may well say that. Gilbert was perfectly horrified when he found he had a wife, though I believe he never saw Mrs. Herbert. Well, Colonel—are you following me?—with all our sympathy for that poor woman, how is one to regret that Ralph Herbert's child should be taken. It is against the laws of heredity to think that there would be no taint, physical or moral, in him. At best it would be an open question. Is it not better for Mrs. Herbert to be losing him now, a mere baby, than be weeping tears of shame over him later? Oh well, here I am at my inn, so I will be wishing you good-night."

"Good-night, and thank you," returned Gavin, a little huskily, and as he walked back quickly to Brae House he breathed more freely, as though he had flung off some weight that oppressed him.

He found his mother sitting patiently by the window, wrapped up in her old quilted satin cloak. As she looked at him questioningly

he put his hand on her arm without a word, and they went slowly down to the farm. Neither of them was in the mood for talking. The unwholesome oppression had lifted from Gavin's mind, but a sense of his own unfaithfulness and want of loyalty humbled him to the dust. Now and then his mother's feeble footsteps filled him with vague uneasiness, and he could perceive that she leant more heavily upon his arm. More than once she stopped to take breath, though she pretended it was only to look at a bright star over the roof of Brae Farm. "The darker the night, the brighter the stars," he heard her say as though to herself. "They are always there, even though the clouds hide them." But he could find no response to this. On the threshold he bade her good-night, and then went back to Brae; but it was long before he slept. And that night his thoughts were with his dead wife, and not with Ellison.

Mrs. Trevor kept vigil beside Lorraine by the doctor's orders; the child's crib had been removed into the dovecote, but Lorraine, drowsy from the effects of the opiate, was unconscious of this.

She slept heavily until morning, and Mrs. Trevor dozed fitfully beside her, wrapped in her old satin cloak; but at the first movement from the bed she was wide awake in an instant.

Before Lorraine opened her eyes she stretched out her arm involuntarily, and her fingers fluttered for a moment only once as they met vacancy instead of resting on the iron bar of the crib. Her brow contracted as though in vague wonder, and then the terrible truth leapt out like a sword from its scabbard. This was the moment that Mrs. Trevor's motherly heart had dreaded. As that blank look of despair came into the large brown eyes, she leant over her and said quietly:

"How glad you must be, dearest, that you called him Theodore." The words had come suddenly to her, without premeditation.

Lorraine looked at her without speaking. She could not have uttered a word to save her life. A deadly faintness seemed to seize her, and there was a cold moisture on her forehead. She said long afterwards to Ellison that for the moment her agony was so great that she thought she was dying.

"Theodore—gift of God," went on Mrs. Trevor, in a soothing monotone, as she took the cold hands in hers and rubbed them gently. "A gift is sometimes given back. Your darling is safe, my poor dear; far safer than he was in your arms, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

Still silence; only now there was a slight quivering of the muscles of the face and throat, then one deep sigh after another seemed to relieve the labouring heart. But though Mrs. Trevor's tears were flowing, Lorraine's eyes were dry, but presently she said:

"You are very kind. Yes, I know all about it, and you are right. Will you go away now, please, for I must dress," and then she leant on her elbow with a forlorn look round the room that nearly broke

Mrs. Trevor's heart. "They have taken him away and I cannot stay here," and then she began to tremble all over.

"They have only moved the crib into the play-room," returned Mrs. Trevor kindly. "There, I will open the door, and you can see it from there. If you will be good and drink some tea, I will leave you to get up, but you are too weak to move just now," and Lorraine, quieted by the view of the little crib, lay down obediently and allowed Mrs. Trevor to minister to her.

"She was so good; she did everything I asked her," observed Mrs. Trevor later, to her son. "I felt as though she were my own child. She is sitting in the play-room now arranging some flowers. Tedo is looking so sweet. I never thought him pretty before. She says it soothes her to look at him. She asked if you would go up presently, Gavin. There is something she wants you to do for her," and Colonel Trevor smothered a sigh, as he said hurriedly that he would go at once.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### IN THE DOVECOTE.

COLONEL TREVOR was just taking down his straw hat from the peg when he saw Mr. Vincent walking rapidly up the drive. As they shook hands, Eric said in a vexed tone:

"I am so sorry that you are going out; I wanted to speak to you particularly if you could spare me a few minutes."

"My dear fellow, I will spare you half an hour if you like," returned Gavin good-humouredly, though if the truth must be told, he was chafing inwardly at the delay. "My mother brought me word that Mrs. Herbert wished to speak to me, but no time was mentioned, and it is quite early. Come to the library, no one will disturb us there."

"I will not keep you long," replied Eric, in a dejected tone—he had passed a miserable night and looked wretchedly ill—"but I must speak to some one," and then he threw himself down in a chair and shaded his face from the light.

Colonel Trevor put his hand on his shoulder. "You are upset, Vincent, and no wonder. It is a terrible shock to us all; but you must not take things too much to heart; it was no fault of yours that the accident happened."

"I wish I could think so," returned Eric, forcing himself to speak calmly. "But I ought to have kept that boy in better order. What am I to do with him, Trevor? Yesterday I was so angry that I dared not touch him for fear I should have harmed him. I give you my word, that when I was dragging the truth out of him I had to hold my hands behind my back. Nora cried because she said that

I looked so dreadful; but at that moment I felt as though we were all that child's murderers."

"I daresay I should have felt the same in your place," replied Colonel Trevor kindly, "but it won't do, Vincent. Pull yourself together and look at things in a sensible light; they are bad enough, heaven knows, without making them worse by getting morbid over them. Hugo is the only sinner, and must bear the brunt of his sin. I suppose a good thrashing would be best, he richly deserves it"—and here Gavin's voice grew stern; "by his own confession he had his orders and he chose to disobey them. How dare he let that baby climb the fence. Miss Lee has forbidden the children to play in that part of the meadow, and he knew the water was deep. I am sorry to say it, Vincent, but I am an old soldier, and believe in discipline; that boy must have a sound caning!"

"Then you must give it to him yourself," returned Eric, turning very white. "I tell you I dare not trust myself to lay a finger on him. When I think of Mrs. Herbert and all her goodness to those children, I feel as though I hated the sight of him. Look here, Trevor, I am not quite myself, and I cannot put things clearly, but Hugo must be punished some other way."

"Very well," returned Gavin reluctantly, "he is your brother, not mine; but you are cruel without meaning to be so. If I know anything of boy-nature, Hugo would rather endure a smart caning at your hands than be sent to Coventry; he is pretty miserable already, you may depend on that; he has had a lesson that will last him for life. Don't shut him up in that stifling hole where the boys sleep. I do not approve of solitary confinement for boys."

"He must have his meals alone. I have told Nora so. I could not eat with him in the room. Nora may make what arrangements she likes; she was up with him half the night; but there is one thing I have decided—he shall go to school at Michaelmas. He is no fit companion for Edmund, and they must be separated as soon as possible."

"There I think you are right; I will back you up in that. But, Vincent, before we leave the subject, I must just say something—don't be too hard on the boy; he deserves punishment, but it must not be too prolonged; any signs of repentance should be encouraged."

"He is repentant enough already," replied Eric, in a strangely-oppressed voice. "Did I not say that Nora was with him half the night trying to comfort him? But what repentance will give Mrs. Herbert back her child? We have robbed her of her happiness. I say we, because Hugo is my flesh and blood. Look at my position, Trevor, it is perfectly unendurable. I am her clergyman; I shall have to read the service over that child; it is my duty to offer her the consolations belonging to my office; but I dare not go near her; she would wince at the very sight of me."

"I see what you mean," returned Colonel Trevor gravely. He thought that he had grasped the reason of the young clergyman's changed looks. His sensitive refined nature was shocked by the awful consequences of his young brother's disobedience; but he little knew the extent of Eric's pain.

His position was, as he had defined it, well-nigh unendurable; the woman whom he secretly adored was in sorrow and dire affliction, and he dare not approach her. Others might surround her with kindly ministry and sympathy, but he, her pastor and friend, must stand aloof; even Colonel Trevor, who was no relation, was to be admitted to her presence, and here a fierce pang of jealousy made Eric's heart throb. In his youthful enthusiasm he would have been ready to lay down his life in the service of the sweet woman whom he called his liege lady, and yet his own brother had inflicted this life-long sorrow on her.

"She will loathe the very sound of our name," he had groaned more than once during that long night. "If one could only atone! But the child is dead, and no such atonement is possible."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Gavin to himself. "He is terribly sensitive, but I can feel for him; in his place I should have been ready to cut my own throat. I wonder if one dare mention his name?" And then, as the farm came in sight, Gavin's face grew grave and sad, and he forgot Eric in the thought of seeing Mrs. Herbert.

He knew where he should find her—in the dovecote. Tedo's beloved playmates were in their accustomed place, peering in at the window with their round yellow eyes, and arching their soft grey necks as though in surprise at the unusual silence.

Lorraine had finished her work, and Tedo lay under a quilt of lovely summer flowers, and now she sat beside him, holding one tiny waxen hand between her hot palms. She looked up with dry weary eyes at Gavin as he entered; their heaviness, the patient oppression of her face and attitude filled him with unutterable pity. Hardly knowing what he did he laid his hand over hers and the child's.

"Dear Mrs. Herbert, is it good for you to be here?"

Then a vague surprise came into her eyes.

"What does it matter?" she said in a tired voice. "Nothing can be good for me now. Of course I must be with him; does he not look sweet? He is smiling as though the angels were talking to him. His mouth was always so lovely—every one said so."

Gavin could not answer; his eyes felt suddenly hot and smarting. He had not moved away his hand, but Lorraine noticed nothing; presently he stooped over her, and said rather unsteadily:

"You sent for me. I hope you are going to tell me that there is something I can do for you."

It was sad to see the effort she made to concentrate her thoughts; but he waited patiently until he saw that she had mastered the question.

"I am very stupid," she said, putting up her hand to her head, "but I do not seem to understand things clearly. Yes, I know now what I want. Will you take me this evening to the churchyard? There is no one else that I can ask, and you are so kind—so kind, and my Tedo was so fond of you. He said when he grew up he meant to be a soldier like the Colonel. I must go myself and choose the place for him."

"Do you think you are strong enough?" he asked gently.

But she put this question by as though it did not concern her.

"It is such a pretty churchyard!" she went on. "I remember that first evening that Ellison said she meant to be buried there, and there is a corner with two may-trees and a laburnum; that would just do for my little child. You will take me, will you not? I asked your mother about it, and she said you would not refuse. There is something else that I want to say to you, but everything goes out of my head."

"Never mind, you will remember it presently, and I am in no hurry. Very well, then, I will bring round the close carriage at half-past six, if that will suit you; it is no distance, and we shall not be long."

"Oh no, we shall not be long! I could not stay away long. I think I shall ask Dorcas to sit beside him while I am away. I daresay you think me foolish, but I cannot have my baby left alone. I never left you more than I could help, did I, Tedo, my sweet?"—and as she bent to kiss him Gavin hastily removed his hand, though Lorraine's poor confused brain hardly comprehended the action.

Gavin walked to the window, causing a fluttering of wings as the frightened doves flew off to the granary roof. The position was exquisitely painful to him. If she would only have wept and bemoaned herself like other women. But the sight of her pale face and soft, bewildered eyes gave him positive pain.

"She ought to cry—she must cry!" he said angrily to himself. "Her brain is getting confused, and she can find no relief. What is a man to do in such a case? If only Ellison were here! She ought to have a woman near her, and my mother is not fit for it."

"Colonel Trevor"—the low voice made him start—"I know now what I wanted to say; it is something about Mr. Vincent."

"Vincent! Do you mean that you would like to see him?" asked Gavin, blundering in his surprise; but a sudden grey shade on Lorraine's face warned him that he had made a mistake.

"Oh no!" she returned faintly. "I can see no one—I want to see no one but you and Mrs. Trevor."

Why did Gavin flush suddenly as Lorraine said this?

"It is only that I wanted you to ask him not to be hard on Hugo." She brought out the word with difficulty, and her head drooped. "Tell him I said so." And then she turned hastily and hid her face on the edge of the crib; and so he left her, and the doves flew back,

and all through the hot afternoon they sat and cooed to the dead child, and Lorraine, drowsy with pain, seemed to hear her boy's voice mingling with them.

At the appointed time Gavin drove to the farm and found her quite ready for him. During the short drive she leant back with her eyes closed, but he could see by her moving lips that she had not fainted. When he helped her to alight she staggered a little as though from weakness, and as they walked up the churchyard path he was obliged to give her his arm, but the fresh evening air seemed to revive her.

"This is the place I meant," she said presently, pointing to a corner of the churchyard that adjoined the playground belonging to the infant school. "It is so pretty and quiet there. No one ever passes; but the children's voices sound so cheerfully. There must be no dark gloomy trees to overshadow my Tedo. May blossoms—he was so fond of may—and the 'golden curls,' as he always called laburnum. Yes—that is the place. Will you tell Mr. Vincent so, and manage it for me?"

"Yes, yes—I will settle everything. Look, there is a seat; you must sit down for a moment—you are not able to stand."

"The air is very sweet," returned Lorraine, almost vacantly. "You are very kind, Colonel Trevor. I am giving you so much trouble; but I have no one—no one belonging to me. Is there not somebody following us? I keep seeing a dark shadow flit round the church. Perhaps it is my fancy. I seem full of fancies to-day."

"I will go and look," he said, anxious to soothe her, for the dilated brightness of her eyes troubled him. But his search was brief and perfunctory. It was only fancy, for who would be taking the trouble to dog their footsteps, he said to himself. But for once Gavin was wrong. That very moment a slight boyish figure was crouching behind the buttress within reach of his hand. Hugo, wandering aimlessly about the common, had caught sight of the carriage, had guessed their errand, and had followed them.

Colonel Trevor had been right in his opinion. Hugo would rather have borne the pain of a tremendous thrashing than have endured this isolation. Eric's white face of suppressed anger the previous evening had been dreadful to him. The very way in which he had silently pointed to the door seemed to affix the mark of Cain on his brow. The poor child was half maddened with remorse and misery, and the memory of the little limp, inert figure lifted out of the pond was so horrible that he could with difficulty prevent himself from screaming hysterically. Eric's orders had been that Edmund should in future share his room, and the little fellow was sobbing out his heart on his pillow in the adjoining chamber. Hugo had no light, and no gleam of moonlight relieved the darkness. He could hear Eric walking up and down the passage below, and the sound was hardly reassuring. Then his door opened, and Nora, in her white night-dress, with her pretty brown hair falling over her shoulders, had

glided into the room. She carried a candle carefully shaded, which she set down on the wash-stand. Nora's eyes were swollen with crying; but as she sat down on the bed and put her arms round him something like comfort stole into the wild suffering heart, and Hugo broke into hoarse sobs.

"You ought not to come near me, Nora," he gasped. "Eric says I am a murderer—I have murdered Tedo."

"Oh, no, no," returned Nora, mingling her tears with his. "No, Hughie dear, you have been very naughty—oh, dreadfully naughty; but it is not murder. Murderers don't love the people they kill, and you did love Tedo so. Oh dear! oh dear! we all loved him—he was such a darling. Oh, Hughie, I don't want to make you miserable, but why—why did you let him go near the pond?"

"I forgot—I did indeed, Nora. I was watching Edmund's boat, and one of the little men and the cannon had fallen into the water, and the old drake came up and tried to swallow them. And it was so funny, and Tedo asked to look. And then he cried—I can hear his voice now—I have to stop my ears I hear it so plainly—'Hughie dear, boy wants to look. Boy will look.' And I took him up. It was Eddie's fault—he screamed so loud, and I let go; and then—Oh, that splash!" And here Hugo buried his face against Nora's thin little shoulder, and clung to her.

"Do not be too hard on the boy," Gavin had said. "He has had a lesson that will last him all his life." And he was right. All his life long Hugo would never forget those hours of boyish agony when he first learned the meaning of those words, "The wages of sin is death." Alas, in his case, death was to the innocent!

## CHAPTER XXXI.

"IT IS A SORROWFUL WORLD."

WHEN Colonel Trevor returned from his unavailing search, he found Lorraine had risen from her seat. She was standing with her arms hanging at her side, and her eyes fixed on the daisies; the bewilderment on her face had increased; as he came up to her, she put her ungloved hands on his coat-sleeve.

"How silent and dark it is, you have been gone such a long time"—he had been absent barely three minutes—"and I could not bear it. I want you to take me home; it frightens me to stay here and to think of what will be done here to-morrow."

"We will go then," he returned gently. "I daresay Roberts will be glad not to keep the horses out any longer; you are sadly exhausted, and the dews are heavy this evening." He hardly knew what to say, and yet he dared not be silent for a moment; he was terribly

anxious about her ; something told him that she would be unable to bear the strain much longer, the unnatural calm must be broken : he noticed the difficulty with which she dragged herself to the gate, as though her feet were weighted with lead. When they reached the carriage he had to lift her in. Neither of them noticed a little figure gliding between the tombstones, and then climbing the low wall in the dusk. As the brougham door closed Hugo swung himself up behind.

Gavin had meant to leave Mrs. Herbert the moment he saw her safely into the house, but as he was about to bid her good-night, Lorraine felt her dress suddenly pulled, and looked vaguely round ; but a deadly pallor overspread her features when she saw Hugo.

The poor child was in a sad plight, his face grimy with tears and dust, but as Lorraine uttered a low irrepressible cry, he flung himself on the ground at her feet—still holding her dress—convulsively.

"Oh, do let me see him, just for one moment. I want to ask him to forgive me ; you may beat me, or kick me if you like, or trample on me. I know I deserve it, but I must see him, and tell him how sorry I am ; I did so love him. I wish I had killed myself and not him, poor dear Tedo."

Lorraine tried to speak—tried to release her dress ; and then Gavin suddenly lifted her, as though she were a child, and carried her to the sitting-room ; as he did so he could have blessed the boy, for he knew that Hugo's despairing words had broken the icy spell. As he placed her half fainting on the couch, she hid her face in her hands, and the sound of her wild sobbing brought the frightened maids from the kitchen.

Gavin waved them peremptorily away and whispered to Mrs. Tucker to bring wine, or some restorative ; then he went up to Hugo, as he stood outside almost sick with fright, and patted him on the shoulder.

"Don't be frightened, Hugo, you have done good, not harm ; no one has been able to make her cry before ; don't let her see you, she will ask for you if she feels able ; stay where you are for the present," and Hugo, for once in his life, obeyed implicitly.

When Mrs. Tucker returned with the wine Gavin took it from her hand, but he made no effort to check Lorraine's tears ; those deep, difficult sobs made his heart ache with pity ; he was thankful when they ceased, and a passion of tears brought her relief. Presently when she had grown calmer, and had drunk the wine that he held to her lips, she whispered, "Thank you so much—will you send Hugo to me a moment ; he is outside still, is he not ?" and Gavin at once obeyed her.

Hugo would have flung himself on his knees again, but Lorraine put out a feeble hand to stop him. "No, Hugo, not to me. Ask God to forgive you your disobedience. As for my darling, he has forgiven long ago. In heaven there is only love and peace, love and peace."

Her voice was very faint as though from exhaustion.

"I cannot talk to-night, I feel too ill," she went on. "To-morrow—yes, to-morrow you shall see him; there, God bless you for my little angel's sake." And as she stretched out that kind hand to the miserable child, Gavin felt as though he could have kissed the hem of her garment out of sheer worship and reverence for her goodness.

The following afternoon a pencilled note was brought to Eric. As he saw the handwriting, a dark flush came to his brow, and his hand shook as he opened it.

"Will you come to me," it said. "I ought to have seen you before, but I shall have him such a little while, and I wanted to be left alone with him; please forgive me my selfishness, and come now. There is something I must say to you.—LORRAINE HERBERT."

Eric crushed up the letter in his hand with a sudden fierce impulse; then he smoothed it out and read it again. The next moment he was striding across the common.

Ruth showed him into the sitting-room. Even after these two days it had a deserted, uninhabited look; the flowers on the table were withered, and no one had carried them away; and the closed windows and blinds added to the general dreariness.

Eric stood still with his eyes fixed on the door, but he was not kept waiting long; in another minute Lorraine entered. Eric hardly dared to look at her, the very touch of her cold soft hand gave him a shock. How fearfully pale she looked; her eyes were half extinguished with weeping, but she was wonderfully calm as she walked to the window and drew up the heavy Venetian blind.

"Why have they done this?" she said, and there was a trace of irritation in her tone. "Do they not know that he hated darkness? Will you open the window for me, Mr. Vincent? If I do not have air, I feel as though I should die," and then she seated herself on the broad window-seat, and after a moment's hesitation Eric seated himself opposite to her. As he did so, he noticed there was a grey thread in her glossy brown hair.

"If you had not sent for me, I should not have dared to come," he began impulsively; "you have not misunderstood me, Mrs. Herbert?"

"Oh no," she returned wearily, "there was no possibility of misunderstanding; it was kindness on your part that kept you away." Her voice trembled as though she found it difficult to control it, and there was a painful quivering of the mouth; but after a moment she gathered strength to go on.

"It is so hard not to be selfish. I feel as though I only want to think of him—people tire me so; but they mean to be kind. I wished to speak to you about Hugo; I saw him last night."

Eric gazed at her in speechless consternation.

"He followed us to the churchyard, and then to the house; he wanted our forgiveness. To-day he came again, and I took him to see my boy. It tried me; it was very painful, but I am glad I did

not refuse. It makes me almost happy to know that my little child will have helped him to be good, that is why I sent for you, Mr. Vincent, to tell you that we have forgiven him, and you must forgive him too."

Eric could not master himself sufficiently to speak. She was putting them all to shame; his silence, his suppressed agitation seemed to trouble Lorraine; she sighed heavily as though her self-imposed task wearied her too much.

"Promise me that you will forgive him," she said almost imploringly; "he is so young, such a mere child, and he suffers so."

"I will try," he returned. "I think these two days I have almost hated him; I could not endure to see him. Mrs. Herbert, you are a better Christian than I." But she shook her head.

"No, no, you must not say that, but my boy was so fond of him, Mr. Vincent. I must say one thing, and then I shall have finished. Keep Hugo near you; be kind and patient with him. I do not think that he will give you any more trouble, but he must not be trusted with Edmund," and then she rose from her seat and held out her hand. "Will you forgive me?—but I cannot stay. I am very weak, and talking tries me so, and I must keep my strength for to-morrow."

He had not promised her that he would forgive Hugo, but he knew her word would be law to him; his heart was full of bitterness to the boy, but all the same he must bring himself to tolerate him. As he walked across the common, he could see him sauntering aimlessly among the bushes like a forlorn little Esau, and he stood still and beckoned to him.

The boy approached him reluctantly.

"Did you call me, Eric?" he asked in a frightened sort of way.

"Yes, I wanted to speak to you; don't look at me as though you thought I was going to strike you. I have never yet hurt you, have I?" and Hugo shook his head. "I want to know how you dared go near Mrs. Herbert; no, I am not asking in anger," as Hugo began to cry, "I only wanted to know what put it into your head to do such a thing."

"I can't tell you if you speak in that voice," returned Hugo piteously. "I would rather you hit me than look at me as you do; everyone hates me except Eddie, and I hate myself, but I could not have lived if she had not forgiven me," and here, worn out with excess of emotion, Hugo flung himself on the ground in a fit of sobbing. "Go away, Eric," he continued passionately, "I know you hate the sight of me, and I won't talk to you any more."

For the first time Eric felt a little softened towards the culprit.

"Get up, Hugo," he said peremptorily, "and don't make a fool of yourself; don't I tell you I am not angry now. Mrs. Herbert told me that she had forgiven you, so I must do my best to forgive you too."

Hugo looked at him as though he could not venture to believe his ears; then he left off crying, and rose slowly from the ground.

"Do you really mean this, Eric; and may Eddie sleep in my room again?"

"No," returned his brother shortly. "Things can't be as they were. I dare not trust Eddie to be with you."

"Then you have not forgiven me," returned Hugo, in a tone of such despair that Eric was touched and startled.

"Yes, Hugo, I have, at least I am trying to do so, but I cannot trust you until you have proved to me that you have learnt to obey. Eddie may play with you when Nora or I are there; but he is never to be alone with you. This is the only punishment I shall inflict. At Michaelmas you shall go to school—you will like that, Hugo—and then you will have plenty of companions."

But Hugo, crushed and bitter, refused to be consoled by this.

"You are sending me to school because you are afraid of Eddie, and because you hate the sight of me," he began rebelliously, and then his little heart began to heave. "I can't bear it, Eric. I think you might trust me now; I shall never, never be naughty again."

"Won't you, Hughie"—and here Eric put his arm round his young brother, and there was no hardness in his voice now. "I don't think any of us dare say that. I shall be able to trust you again some day, I am sure of that, and until then you will be brave, and try your hardest to be good, and—and I will help you," and he laid his hand on the curly head. That brotherly touch brought comfort to Hugo, and in his childish heart he registered a vow that Eric should never distrust him again.

The next afternoon most of the inhabitants of Highlands gathered in the churchyard. Mrs. Trevor was unable to attend; but Muriel, who had now taken up her quarters at the farm, accompanied her brother and Lorraine.

Eric had arranged that some of the school children should carry the tiny coffin, and since early morning, he and Miss Spencer, the infant-schoolmistress, and Nora and Daniel had been busy lining the grave with ferns and wild flowers that the children had gathered. As Lorraine looked at the deep green nest with its fringe of ferns, and late-blooming roses, her lip trembled a little and there was a mist before her eyes.

"I shall go to him but he will not return to me," Lorraine said to herself, as the children threw in their flowers one by one. She stood there so long that Gavin took her hand at last, and, placing it on his arm, drew her gently away. More than one person noticed the Colonel's excessive paleness as he handed the young widow into the carriage, and stood bareheaded as she drove away.

CHAPTER XXXII.

HE MUST DREE HIS WEIRD TOO.

On his return home, Gavin had gone straight to his mother's dressing-room; and Mrs. Trevor, who was lying on her couch, looked at him rather anxiously as he stood beside her. Perhaps it was the strong sunlight, but she fancied he looked older. She had never noticed those lines before round his mouth, and his deep-set eyes were unusually melancholy.

"I am afraid all this has tried you, Gavin," she said gently. Then he sat down beside her and the gloom deepened on his brow.

"It has not been cheerful certainly," he returned, with an abrupt laugh. "But I suppose it was all in the day's work, and there was no one else to do it." He had said those words to himself over and over again as he had walked back from the church. "How could he help himself; there was no one else."

"No," she replied, in a grieved voice, "it is sad that I am such a broken reed just now. I longed so much to be there. Muriel will do her best, but she will not understand, she has not served her apprenticeship to trouble—as you and I have, Gavin, my dear—and that is why we suit Mrs. Herbert best."

"Mother," he said suddenly, and there was a harsh vibrating note of pain in his voice, "I wish to Heaven that Ellison would send us her address. I do not believe our telegram has reached her yet. What a horrible complication it is; if she were only here to look after Mrs. Herbert."

"Yes, indeed," sighed Mrs. Trevor. "I agree with you, that nothing could be more unfortunate than her absence just now. Muriel, poor child, will do her best, she is devoted to Mrs. Herbert, but she has not dear Ellison's experience. Ellison is so helpful and strong in any emergency and her calmness is so soothing. I miss her dreadfully, especially now, when I am separated from Mrs. Herbert."

"You do not miss her more than I do," returned Gavin almost harshly. Something in his mother's words seemed to sting him. "Nothing is as it should be, you are being neglected, for of course Muriel ought to be here. But how can we leave Mrs. Herbert to that loneliness. She is ill now; I never saw any one so changed in a few days."

Mrs. Trevor looked alarmed; in her weak state everything troubled her. "I thought you said she was so calm, Gavin."

"Yes, she was outwardly calm, and gave us no trouble. I think it is her nature to be unselfish, but one can see what she suffers Muriel says the worst part is that she cannot sleep; she spends half the night sitting by her window."

"You must give her time, Gavin dear. You and Muriel must not be too anxious. When God takes away our children, we are bound to suffer, and oh, what suffering it is," and then she looked at him with a touching little smile. "She must dree her weird, and we must pray for her."

When Gavin had eaten his solitary dinner he went out into the garden. There was a lime walk overlooking a large meadow that was a favourite resort of his. At this hour it would be deserted, and no one would be likely to invade his solitude. A dull weight of pain had been oppressing him all day, and now he knew that he must look things bravely in the face.

What was this thing that had happened to him? how had it come about, and when? Was it not monstrous, incredible, almost inhuman, that he should have found it out now? "Good Heavens! what a fool I must have been not to have discovered it before," he groaned, as he brought his hand heavily down on the fence. "How was I to guess that such a misfortune should come to me—to me of all men. Oh, Nell, Nell, why did you die and leave me, for I have made a poor business of life ever since."

But he must look it in the face; he was no coward; and after all it was more his misfortune than his fault. He had been good friends with Mrs. Herbert; they had been on a pleasant footing of intimacy. Her society was congenial to him, her frankness and simplicity had always pleased him. But he had never put her on an equality with Ellison. When Ellison had been in the room he had often forgotten Mrs. Herbert's existence.

Why was it then, that in her sorrow she had suddenly grown dear to him, so dear that he hardly dared to be with her, for fear he should betray his tenderness? Her very dependence on him added to the danger. In a hundred touching ways she showed him how fully she trusted him. What cruel fate had thrust this new trouble in his path? No, he would be honest; he was no lovesick boy, but a sorely-tried man, who had buried his beautiful young wife long years ago, and who knew well what loneliness and pain meant. He would not accuse himself of fault when there had been none. His only error lay in the idea that his warm affection for Ellison would satisfy him. That was the only mistake he had made.

Affection, friendship, admiration for Ellison's tranquil virtues; what were these compared to the passionate pulsation of his heart, when he had laid his hand over Lorraine's and her dead child's, when his love and pity had been dumb within him?

"Yes—he loved her, loved her, loved her." He said it out loud, and some meek-eyed cattle feeding near him raised their heads and looked at him. For once he would own it; crushed, broken-hearted as she was, she was dearer to him than any other woman living. Something in her sweetness and naïve simplicity seemed to remind him of his wife. True she had not his Nell's beauty, or her exquisite

colouring, but in these last few days he had thought her almost lovely. "What other woman," he said to himself, "would have borne this trouble as she has borne it—without a word of complaint? How can any man be near her and not love her? No, I am not ashamed of it; I have no need to be ashamed of anything."

Gavin's pride and self-reliance would be a tower of strength. He was no puny boy, to shrink from suffering, but all the same, he could not close his eyes to the fact that he had made a terrible mistake.

Lorraine Herbert was the woman he loved—the woman whom he desired most ardently to make his wife, and yet in honour he was already pledged to Ellison, although no formal word had passed between them. What was that he had said to her that evening at the gate of the Woodlands, when she had besought him to say no more? Was it possible that she had failed to understand him when he had kissed her brow as a sign and earnest of his affection? Had she not promised to listen to his wooing when she returned; promised faithfully? And could he have any doubt of her answer? He knew in his own heart that Ellison cared for him far more than she knew herself; that no other man but he would ever become her husband. And he knew too, that this carrying out of his unspoken pledge would be pain and grief to him, but not for one moment did he try to escape his doom.

"He too must dree his weird," he said to himself, with a forlorn smile, for how could he trifle with the affections of a woman so dear to him as Ellison? True, he would never love her as he would have loved Lorraine—to his sorrow he knew that now—but at least he could do his duty, and Ellison should never miss any tenderness that was her due.

"Neither of them will ever know it," he thought, as he paced to and fro in the fast-gathering darkness. "It is my own trouble, my own pain; it will not touch them. God helping me it shall never touch them. I shall live through it; other men have under similar circumstances. If only Ellison would come home, and then I could settle it."

Alas, there was something ominous in Gavin's feverish desire to hurry on matters! Truthful, honourable, and upright as he was, he was relying too much on his own strength.

When Ellison came back his course would be perfectly simple; he must induce her to consummate their engagement, and then he must see as little as possible of Mrs. Herbert. It was clearly not possible to hold himself aloof now; Muriel had asked him to go down early the next morning to the Farm.

"Mrs. Herbert will like to see you, and there is some business for you to settle," she had said to him. "We can do nothing without you, Gavin"—and then he knew he must go. No, he must not shrink from seeing her just now. She needed him too much; and, after all—here he smiled bitterly in the darkness—what did a little

more pain signify, when he had made such a mess of his life? But not for one moment did he shut his eyes to the suffering which he knew was in store for him.

The next day, and each succeeding day, he went down to the Farm, but so strong was the force he put on himself during the half hour or so that he spent there that neither Muriel nor Lorraine noticed anything different in his manner.

Lorraine, indeed, withdrawn into the inner court of her great sorrow, was less observant than usual of what passed round her. In some indefinable way a sort of mist seemed between her and outward things; but Muriel, who was less absorbed, noticed that a faint smile came to her pale lips when her brother entered the room where they were sitting.

Nothing else seemed to interest or rouse her. She would sit at her work silently, but after a few stitches the work would lie in her lap unheeded, and she would look out at the gay beds of flowers with a blank look that saw nothing.

She would sit so while Muriel read to her, but it may be doubted how much she understood of the book. Sometimes in the middle of a sentence she would rise suddenly and go away, and then Muriel never ventured to follow her. She would find her an hour later in the dovecote, sitting beside the crib with the tears rolling down her face, and some little garments on her lap; she would look up at Muriel rather piteously.

"I did not mean to be rude," she would say tremulously, "but while you were reading I seemed to hear his voice so plainly; and though I knew it was foolish, I felt I must come up here. I do love sitting here," she said once, "with all his things round me. What do you think? I was so angry with Dorcas just now; I found her tidying the toy-cupboard. But I drove her away; I told her she must never enter this room again. Oh, I am afraid I was very cross, for she began to cry; but it must be my care now. Look, I have been feeding the coocoos—that is what my darling always called them. Do you see that one, it was his favourite; Mammy Coochoo he always called it."

"It seems as though I can do nothing for her," observed Muriel disconsolately, when Gavin came a little later. "I think she likes best to be alone. Oh yes, she will come down to you! You are the only person she cares to see, unless it is mother; but mother has not been near us for days."

"She is not well. Why don't you come up to the House sometimes, when Mrs. Herbert can spare you?" And then he paused, and continued rather abruptly: "We have heard from Ellison."

"Yes, I know; Mrs. Herbert has had a letter too. I think it has upset her; she said it was so very, very kind. Did Ellison write to you, Gavin?"

"No," he returned, walking to the window as he spoke; "the letter

was to my mother. She is awfully shocked! She says nothing has ever shocked her so much in her life. They had only just received the news, the telegram had not reached her. If Mrs. Herbert has had a letter, you know, of course, about Miss Mervyn's illness?"

"Yes, poor woman, she has rheumatic fever. Ellison thinks her bed at the last inn must have been damp; but it is impossible for her to leave her. They are in such a miserable little place too, but there is no moving her at present."

"Why did she ever go with them?" returned Gavin irritably. "Think of her shut up in that bare chalet in a Tyrolean valley, and having to nurse Miss Mervyn night and day. It will break Ellison down, strong as she is; but be sure Mr. Mervyn will do his best to get help. She says they rather like the doctor; he is a sensible sort of person, and they have heard of an English physician who is staying at a place near, and they mean to get him over."

But here he broke off, as his ear caught the soft footfall outside, and the next moment Lorraine entered.

*(To be continued.)*

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## EXPERIENCES.

CARRY your sorrows to a place apart,  
And sit with them in silence for a while—  
They are God's message, sent to reconcile  
His vastest ways with each poor human heart—  
And you shall learn that all their keenest smart  
Is under law—as seasons of the year  
Which bring the flowers to bloom, the seed to bear,  
And then pass calmly, having done their part.  
But take your troubles to the market-place,  
And cast them down beneath the feet of men;  
So may they make (hid from your aching ken)  
A surer footing for a younger race.  
Our sorrows are the sacred store of each,  
But what we learn by trouble, let us teach!

ISABELLA FVIE MAYO.

## OPEN SESAME.

THERE are few more interesting moments in our lives than those in which some familiar thing suddenly appears to us in a new light, and becomes invested with a hidden and symbolic meaning hitherto unsuspected by us.

Coming home rather late the other night, I had an experience of this kind, which made so vivid an impression on my mind, that I have been working out the train of thought it suggested almost ever since.

Locks and keys are familiar objects enough ; but as I stood at my door in the summer moonlight, and slipped the key—none of your trivial latch-keys which will fit any lock, but a many-warded, ponderous key, like a many-sided character—as, I say, I slipped the key into the lock and essayed to turn it, it resisted, and the sudden fancy struck me that all my efforts to turn it would be unavailing. I may as well confess that a strange and uncanny feeling came over me, as I stood outside the closed door, albeit the door of my home—a forlorn sense of helplessness and loneliness which for a moment paralysed my hand. I recovered myself almost instantly, and steadily turned the key in the lock, which slid back with a loud click, and the next moment I stood in the hall. But long after I had lighted my candle and gone safely upstairs, I pursued the train of thought suggested by this slightest and most commonplace of adventures. I discerned all sorts of analogies and symbols in locks and keys. It seemed to me that the doubt which made me falter for a moment, when the key refused to turn, was but a figure of the far more grievous doubt which chills us, when we have fashioned our souls into a key wherewith if possible to unlock the mysteries of some other soul.

Ah, then, indeed, we shiver with hope and fear and wild expectancy !

Will the lock answer to our key ? Will its wards fall back ? Will the door open and let us in ? Or is our key wanting in some important part, so that it is powerless to touch the strongest ward of all, which governs the rest ? Or, perhaps, some comparatively slight peculiarity in lock or key makes all our labour vain, for we dare not force the lock, knowing that a key which, as we say, “almost fits” may get to hamper a lock so that no key shall fit it. It may be—and how deep the pain with which we perceive this—that our key is too large to go into the lock at all, or, when in is too complicated : it is trying to open wards which are but blank spaces, and enclose nothing. How sorrowfully we withdraw our key, sometimes with difficulty and sore hurt to the poor key, and turn away from the inhospitable door !

But when, almost in despair, perhaps, we venture once more, and doubtfully, even carelessly—for we take little pains when we expect to fail—slip our key into some untried lock, how our heart beats with trembling joy as it fits kindly into its place! There is a hitch; we shall be disappointed again, with a bitterer disappointment than ever! But no; some lucky twist has brought the key fairly into play at last, and ward for ward the lock answers. Maybe it goes hard, even creaks aloud as its wards roll back, but it opens and our key is useless no longer! And we enter to the light and warmth within, and are blest. Yet not more blest than blessing, for never key more longed to open than do these poor rusting locks desire to be opened.

For we are all locks and keys in turn—mutually locking and un-locking each other. Some of us, alas, can lock, but by some strange fault in us, cannot open. Some of us are stiff, ill-hung locks, that resist even the very key cast expressly to open us—yet we have this redeeming virtue, that no other key can find its way to our wards, and steal the treasure we were set to guard. Some simple locks will answer to many keys—some keys will open many locks—yet no two are exactly alike, seen by careful eyes, and no key is so simple but that there is some one lock which it fits best.

I followed this analogy still farther, and fancied that I could perceive this special relationship of lock and key in every friendship worth the name: of the two souls, one is the key, and the other the lock. Sometimes, lock and key were never made for each other; they are makeshifts, and grate and strain as they come into collision, doing violence to each other every time, until the wards are twisted and hampered, and the key is bent away. But when lock and key exactly fit, how easily the bolts slide back to let the holder of the key come into that house and dwell there!

Some rich and many-sided natures are as keys to many less complicated locks—each of their wards opens some one lock. Such natures give much—for he who opens gives more than he who is opened—and receive for the most part only the joy of being allowed to give—an almost-sufficing joy to a great soul. But these human locks and keys are of more plastic stuff than iron and steel. The soul which has been the key to open many locks, is itself a lock too, desiring with great desire some master-key, strong and many-warded enough to unlock those bolts which ordinary keys have tried in vain—never, indeed, reaching the heart of the lock at all, where the secret spring lies hidden which must be touched, or the cunningest key will fail to stir a single ward.

These are some of the thoughts which I learnt from my doorway. The analogies are imperfect and partial. Human locks and keys, however simple in structure now, however warped and hampered by ill-usage, have in them a capacity for endless growth—a growth which is quickened into fresh life every time any key unlocks them. And the keys grow too. Some, alas, grow faster than the

locks they should open—as some locks outgrow the keys which once fitted them tolerably. Growth is good, but growing-pains are often hard to bear. Whichever way my thoughts and fancies travelled, they always returned to the unspeakable joy of him, who, faltering forth his “Open Sesame,” sees the door fall back to let him in. He forgets the dreary plain, and the wild mountain, and the dim and trackless forest, where he wandered lonely, dreaming of a home he might never know. He forgets the many doors which were deaf to his spell. Here is home at last—the home he has been dreaming of all his life long—here is home, and he is expected, and welcome, and he enters, and is at rest.

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#### IN THE VALLEY.

IF a ghost may indeed come back,  
And wander once more  
Along the familiar track,  
To the old house-door,  
At full of the moon I shall come  
To the garden-gate,  
When the sheaves have been carried home  
And summer wears late.  
I shall stand in the moonbeams chill,  
When mists wrap the dale,  
I shall watch where the steep of the hill  
Hide the white road-trail;  
At full of the moon shall I hear,  
As I watch and wait,  
Shall I hear a step draw near  
To the garden-gate?  
And out of the shadowy gloom  
Of the great elm-tree,  
Will my old lover once more come  
To keep tryst with me?

MARY A. M. MARKS.

## AN IDLE SUMMER.

## I.

THERE could be no doubt as to Cyril Daynton's popularity. Rich, handsome, young and well born, he was thought much of by everyone. Perhaps certain ladies tinged their remarks concerning him with a touch of bitterness ; but then certain ladies may have had personal reasons for their uncharitable comments. Possibly, if he had had a sister, a thoughtful, idealistic girl, she might have cured him of one grave fault ; but he was alone except for the invalid mother who doted on him. So he flirted his way though life unimproved by all others as by himself.

During the summer of 188—, Mrs. Daynton was rather more unwell than usual, and at her request Cyril stayed at home practically all through the season.

One afternoon, it was in June, he called at the quaint, ivy-clad house, where his uncle lived, purposing to spend an hour or two in idle conversation with his cousin Sybil, grave, demure, gentle Sybil Butler, who loved her handsome cousin, in the way and degree of a sister, and whom he kissed, coaxed, teased, or scolded as the humour turned him.

On this afternoon he did not get his idle conversation, for he found Sybil engaged with a visitor, a Miss Amy Hatherton. Cyril, after being introduced, was very quiet for some little time, and allowed the burden of the conversation to be borne by the visitor. He discovered her to be a quiet—very quiet—girl, who saw all life's problems in a dim, religious light whose atmosphere was laden with the incense of devotion and disturbed only by the floating echoes of Cathedral anthems, and whose experience of people and of pleasures had been limited in the extreme. Then Cyril talked of churches and cathedrals ; of Durham, York and Ely ; of Amiens, Cologne and St. Mark's. He had an Englishman's prejudice against things foreign, and so he was not led to say anything against Miss Hatherton's love of one English cathedral with what Ruskin calls "its secluded, continuous, drowsy felicities, and its evidence of the sense and steady performance of such kind of duties as can be regulated by the cathedral clock."

On the next morning, Amy coming out of the little Church of Saint Agnes was surprised to find herself followed by Cyril. The meeting seemed accidental, and as Cyril did not take the trouble of informing her that it was the first time for eight years that he had

ever been at a church service—other than a wedding—on a weekday, Amy naturally assumed that he was in the habit of going each morning.

She was delighted, for she had formed the idea that young men were all careless of such things, as her brother was a wild, rackety lad whose sins—large enough, goodness knows—loomed larger than reality in the light of his sister's life. Here, Amy thought, on this fair June morning, was one with every attribute of manhood, strong, brave, and handsome, yet not afraid of being "good." So she was delighted, and artlessly told him so.

"Do you know, I am so pleased to have met you here," she said.

"Are you? Why?" he asked.

"Oh, I am glad you can be serious as well as pleasant. Most men I know don't seem to care about Heaven. I am afraid they think angels would bore them," she answered.

"And do your acquaintances think that?" he rejoined, with a very slight yet unmistakable emphasis on the *your*.

It was the same in every conversation between them. He said flattering things, but in an earnest tone, and his tender, honest, seeming eyes went bail for the truth of every remark. If it had not been for his habit of looking at his companion as though she were the only being in the universe, all would have been well, for otherwise he behaved splendidly. He drove Sybil and her friend to every pretty spot in the neighbourhood. Took them up and down the river whenever they felt inclined. He played tennis with them, and with infinite consideration led Miss Hatherton to think that her aimless spooning of the ball was really quite effective play.

The ten days of Amy's visit came to an end. She took her departure, and a quarter of an hour after the train which carried her homewards had disappeared from his sight, Cyril had well-nigh completely forgotten her existence.

"What a monotonous life that girl must have!" he said to himself as he left the station and that was all he thought or said about her.

But with her, how different! She paid no attention to the carefully chosen confectionery, or the still more carefully selected novel which he had bought her. She scarcely thought of Sybil standing on the platform, Sybil who had been so kind all through the ten days. She had no thought for any but him. She went to her own quiet home, and all its dulness shone bright through the radiant light of love. She was as merry as a lark in the morning hour, and sang and smiled all through the months of that summer. The romance of her life had been fashioned, but she told no one except her friend, Daisy Aynshaw, to whom she wrote a long confidential letter. "Oh, Daisy," one part ran, "I am sure he loves me. I don't wish to be vain, but still I think so because I feel it. He used to look at me so; his eyes seemed to worship me. I had to drop mine often. I think he never spoke because he thought

himself unworthy—unworthy of poor me! And he so good and noble that I think well of myself for being able to love him. I feel so happy, Daisy, for I know that the feelings of a great strong nature such as his are lasting, and I can wait.”

The Miss Aynshaw who received this letter was a girl of many friends. She was for years at school—a fact unusual in the case of such a girl as she was—and all her school companions had loved her. To some—the timid and the gentle—she had been Daisy, a simple-minded generous girl; to others, the merry and thoughtless, she had been Madge, who was game for every mischief free from malice; while the sad and thoughtful had loved her as Margaret, the just and high-minded. It was Daisy Aynshaw who read Amy's letter, and was glad that the pathway of her friend's sad existence was turning from the humdrum, and the sorrowful highways into the sunlit land of love.

Three days after Amy's departure, the Butlers received another visitor, also an old school friend of Sybil; and Cyril was introduced to Miss Grace Elroyd. He soon came to the opinion that to make himself pleasant to her, no church-going, no discoursing on cathedral architecture, no listening to solemn-stealing music would be required; nor were they.

The week which followed Miss Elroyd's arrival passed pleasantly enough, but the memory of its days and his manner of spending them rankled in Cyril's mind. Although so much regretted afterwards, it never seemed otherwise than enjoyable to kill a few days of summer weather in the manner he did. He generally strolled over to his cousin's shortly after breakfast, and then dawdled about, playing tennis at times, but oftener sitting conversing with the visitor, saying little, implying very much, and meaning nothing.

On two or three occasions, excursions were made up and down the river. Of boating Miss Elroyd expressed herself “exquisitely fond,” but she was never anxious for Sybil's company, so perhaps the subtle charm which had given birth to the exquisite fondness was to be found only when the occupants of the boats numbered one of each sex. The evenings generally were spent in the drawing-room, and enlivened by music. Grace sang fairly well, but always to her own accompaniments, and from music. So it happened that while Sybil sat by herself, and said that each song was “very nice,” and Mrs. Butler slept contentedly in an easy chair, Miss Elroyd sang song after song of an amatory and ultra-sentimental character, and Cyril hung over the piano turning the leaves of the music, and making flattering remarks about the singer. Did he think well of himself as he told his falsehood so glibly, and looked down half-pityingly at the doll-like face past its meridian of prettiness, and watched the ceaseless play of eyes which never once looked fairly into his, but were always cast down languishingly, or turned timidly upwards in a manner which their owner hoped would be considered coy? He never troubled to

think about his conduct, he only enjoyed himself. Perhaps the bright flame, if endowed with power to know and feel, would think more of itself, and burn with a brighter glory if it knew of the moths that flutter round it, and flutter to their doom.

Things came to a crisis at the end of a week. Cyril was fond of smoking in the conservatory; Miss Elroyd loved soft, warm, heavy air. So they accidentally, perhaps, discovered each other one evening. Desultory conversation ensued for some time. Then silences came. Then regrets at the approaching end of her visit were murmured in concert. A little sigh broke the stillness. Then Cyril found himself saying good-bye somewhat tenderly, lifting Miss Elroyd's hand to his lips, and suddenly—perhaps her eyes could still fascinate, or perhaps he deemed that lips should take as well as give—he pressed his lips to hers. It was the psychological moment; but a warning footstep was heard, and Sybil came in and asked Grace to come to the drawing-room.

On the following morning Cyril carefully avoided the neighbourhood of his cousin's home, and the afternoon he devoted to his mother. In the evening there came a letter which ran:

"DEAR MR. DAYNTON,—As I told you, my short holiday is over. I must leave this delightful place for Monderley Terrace, Oakton. I had hoped to have seen you again to say *adieu*, and to thank you for your very great kindness.

"Yours,  
"G. E."

"She's gone home to Monderley Terrace, Oakton, has she? Well, it was perhaps time," Cyril said to himself, after reading the letter, and twisting it up he used it to light a cigar with, and long before the cigar was finished he knew no more whither Miss Elroyd had gone than he knew whither had gone the smoke of the cigar.

Yet Miss Elroyd went home accompanied by a delightful feeling of triumph. She had succeeded at last. Her face was growing plainer, her music tiresome, and her eyes growing weaker, but she had won the prize this summer, and success so softened the asperity of her nature that for three whole days she was lovable and loving because she fancied herself loved. She wrote to the friend of whose acquaintance she was proudest, to Madge Aynshaw, and told her all, perhaps more. And Madge, reading the letter, remembered Amy Hatherton, and was troubled.

For almost a fortnight Cyril was away from home, assisting his county in the matches with the northerly cricketing counties, and having materially improved his average by scoring a couple of centuries and two innings of over sixty, he returned in high good humour. When he called to see Sybil, intending to give her a good description of the matches, he found her engaged with another visitor, who had come for a week or more. This was Millicent Poole,

another old school-friend, for it was Sybil's practice, of which no one quite knew the reason, to invite to her home several of her old-time friends, who, she thought, would probably have no other chance of taking a holiday.

Through the half hour which followed his introduction Cyril was wondering how it came that such as Millicent Poole was a friend of Sybil Butler. He only saw a tall, somewhat ungainly girl, with an untidy mass of red-gold hair, with a plain face and a forehead already lined, with hard, somewhat coarse hands, and dressed in a dress undeniably shabby.

He could but wonder, for he knew nothing of old days, and of the commotion there had been once in a highly respectable ladies' school when one thoughtless tongue had told that Milly Poole's father was a convict. He knew nothing of the sadness wrought by ostracism in a heart already overburdened with misery. He had never seen a lonely girl sobbing piteously, while from the distance came merry voices of other girls in play, nor seen her, when the reaction came, with defiant scornful face. He had never heard of the summer day when she had sat by herself, thinking ill of all the world, and dreaming, in a wild way, of how to end her young life and its pain, and another girl, fair-haired, fair-faced, sweet-voiced, had kissed her and told her that she would be her friend for ever. Yes; Margaret Aynshaw, the brilliant, the beautiful, the rich, the high-born, had thrown in her lot with the boycotted one, and timid, but kind, Sybil Butler had followed.

He knew nothing of this, nor of the deep, passionate love with which Millicent repaid their kindness. He saw only a plain face and a shabby dress, and they gave no hint of the nature which shared a common ownership with them—a nature deep and earnest, yet impulsive, loving, and generous, which had beaten all through a life of sorrow against the bars of poverty and ignorance that had fenced it in.

So Cyril wondered, until startled out of his musing by Miss Poole saying: "I have been arguing with Sybil on political subjects. Do you agree with woman suffrage, Mr. Daynton?"

"Well—ah—yes," said Cyril. The eyes of his questioner were absolutely fearless, and the face, plain though it was, looked clever. Cyril thought it better to say "Yes." "You see," he went on, "my idea is that women have been so awfully clever, you know, at times and have turned men about so easily that it seems absurd for us to put on side and talk about woman's unfitness for this and that."

"Are you a politician?" Miss Poole asked.

"Not yet," replied Cyril.

"Or a literary man?" she continued.

"Oh, no," was the answer.

"Then you are the first man, not a politician or a writer, who has given me such an answer; and the politicians, you know, are not always honest, and the scribblers are not always practical."

Millicent took Cyril Daynton to be in earnest, and for the few following days he found himself listening to talk that was all of "sweating"—the term had to be explained to him—of the making of dozens of shirts at so many—or few, rather—farthings a dozen; of shop assistants and long hours, of factories, and woman's labour generally, with other unpleasant topics, the mention of which had hitherto never disturbed the perfumed atmosphere of his life. He was dreadfully bored at first, but was all attention nevertheless, and Miss Poole mistook his courteous attention for interest, and continued more earnestly than before.

Soon, however, Cyril did grow interested. Miss Poole's England was new to him. The England of narrow, filthy alleys, of crowded courts—the England whose blue sky is dimly seen through smoke of factories, whose music is drowned by the jingle of money on countless counters—possessed all the charm of an unknown country for him. One thing, however, puzzled him. How came it that a stranger should talk so freely to him, and take his sympathy and agreement for granted? She never seemed to think of him being on the other side to her, as in truth he was. At length he asked her:

"How is it, Miss Poole, that you pay me the compliment of talking to me as you do?" he said.

"Compliment?" said Millicent.

"I take it as such. You seem to credit me with knowing as much and feeling as deeply as you do yourself."

"I think it must be," said Miss Poole, "because you remind me somehow—I really don't know how—of a very great friend of mine to whom I generally talk in the manner you have heard me. Your cousin knows her—Miss Aynshaw."

"I have heard Sybil speak of her," said Cyril, "and always most enthusiastically. What is she like?"

"She is splendid!" burst out Millicent. "My belief in the ideal is anchored to her, and can never be lost to me. She is the living proof that the beautiful is the good, that the perfect face must belong to the perfect heart and mind. I can't imagine a nobler nature than hers, and I never saw, or ever dreamt of, a fairer face. One day—I shall never forget it—I was tired and vexed, and sick of everything about me. I had to run away from work; I felt I must, and so I took a train, and soon I was sitting alone among sand-hills. Before me stretched the wide estuary reaching to the sea, and above me the sky was beautiful and clear. I could see nothing above me but far-off, never-ending blue. Down where sea and sky met was a pale golden haze, and the sun was sinking slow and sad; but away to my left there rose from behind the smoke a mass of white clouds, and the bank of snowy fleece shaped itself into ordered forms, which pressed upwards, growing fainter and more silvery till they were lost in the immensity of blue. And, as I looked, there were no clouds but myriads of white-robed angels winging their way to Heaven. My

eyes caught the silvery sheen of their wings, and then I saw their faces, and the faces were all of one friend whom I knew. Some were Daisy—loving, gentle, smiling; some were Madge—bright-eyed and laughing; and some were Margaret—cold, perhaps, and proud, but, oh, so just and sincere; but all wore her face, and since then I have seemed to know the angels better and love them more."

"How glad you must be that your sex allows you the privilege of friendship with her," said Cyril.

"My sex! I don't understand," Millicent rejoined.

"A man could never be satisfied with friendship; he could only fall in love with such a one," was Cyril's explanation.

"Well, what then?" said Millicent; adding immediately, "I don't agree with you, though."

"And probably he would not win her, and then look at the misery involved," Cyril answered.

"Tennyson puts the idea differently. Even when it is hopeless it is better than not at all. What would Sydney Carton's story be like with his love for Lucia left out?"

"Oh, that is idealism!"

"Well, shouldn't we believe in it, hope for it, and love it, this idealism which you seem to scout? Is there anything else worth living for?"

"A little knowledge of the world will tell you it's impossible, Miss Poole."

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, Mr. Daynton." Millicent misquoted Pope as usual. "Light does not deceive generally; but stand beneath the blaze of a big street lamp, and, though you will see across the street, see the cabs, the 'busses, the people, yet you will not see the stars be they never so bright. We don't put street lamps everywhere, for sometimes we want to look at the stars. Why don't we use our little knowledge of the world for mere worldly purposes and leave it apart when we contemplate the white stars of the ideal and the Heaven we hope to win?"

"We must take the world as we find it, Miss Poole. The street lamps are of greater service to us than the stars."

"Oh, Mr. Daynton!"

"Well, you see, I am not an idealist, but a very ordinary personage."

"Do you take pleasure or pride in being simply like most other men?"

"Why? Am I simply like other men?"

"That, of course, I can't say."

"You don't like men, do you, Miss Poole?"

"Why do you ask me that?"

"I don't think you do."

"I never said so. I never want to say so. I simply don't understand them; that is all."

"You surprise me."

"Tell me, why do men run girls and women down for being unintellectual, and then, in their next breath, say they dislike clever women. The days of chivalry are dead. We are not to be treated as knights of old are supposed to have treated us, yet still you are jealous of our being anything but dependent upon you. You raise your hats to us still, but it is convention not respect, and many among you would be dreadfully annoyed if our presence kept them say from smoking. These are little things, but in the great big ones it is the same. How cruelly selfish and unjust men are in having one code of social ethics for themselves and another for us. For the Prodigal Son we kill the fatted calf; the Prodigal Daughter we may not know."

Cyril Daynton was surprised. He had wanted nothing except pleasant means of whiling away time. In his companion he asked for prettiness if possible, and in her talk he looked for trivialities; but Fate had sent him Miss Poole and conversation about idealism. He glanced at his companion; she was grave and evidently had no thought for him at the moment. As he looked at the earnest face he grew serious too, and, after a pause, he said:

"Perhaps some of us would be only too glad to learn the lessons such as you would teach. You see, Miss Poole, we are sometimes led to believe that in our intercourse with you, in serious matters nothing counts but money, and in the trifling appearance and manners are more thought of than heart and head. There is many a man, I am sure, who would aim at chivalrous ideals if some woman would help him by giving encouragement, and, when he had fought, would grant the prize for which he had striven, her own heart, and take his in place."

Miss Poole did not know her companion's habit of saying exactly what he fancied would be pleasant to his hearer. She didn't know how he was striving to model his remarks on hers; she only knew that his voice sounded constrained; the words came slowly through the feeling which almost kept them back. She could not but notice, when he assisted her over a stile a moment later, that his eyes looked at her with a tender wistfulness, that there was a grave deference in his bearing, and that his hand held hers for a moment longer than there was need for. And she was almost silent for the rest of the walk and during the entire evening.

Cyril asked his cousin that night about her visitor's history. Then he partly understood Millicent, and his heart was full of pity. He went home and devised schemes of enjoyment, and during the next three days he carried them out. He did more. He said many things he did not mean, and told countless lies with his tender, honest-seeming eyes, with his voice attuned to order, with his hand-clasps, even with his silences. For Millicent, those three days were a dream of delight. The weather for the time came in unusual splendour. Beyond expression was the charm of the river, flowing gently between its wooded banks. Oh, the delight of sauntering

slowly down the scented lanes, through avenues vaulted over by the interlaced branches of the giant trees. Oh, the exhilaration of riding behind magnificent horses in a carriage, the springs of which had surely been fashioned by a genius. How sweet was the subtle pleasure found in the old abbey, where happy laughter ringing out seemed to bring down the corridors of Time faint echoes of prayers and hymns which in the distant past had floated through the silence and the peace; and how impressive the fairness and the sadness of the crumbling ruins bathed in the sunlit glory of the living day, yet wearing still the mantle woven by the memories of centuries long since dead. Far off seemed that northern town, so hideously commonplace, with its awful squalor existing side by side with its wealth and commercial greatness; and farther off still seemed that uncongenial home where the father drank—to dull the memories of Dartmoor, perhaps—and the brother cared only for the making of money and the spending of it on himself, while Millicent was left in loneliness to think of the mother who was dead and of the sister who had gone no one knew whither.

Millicent was happy, and slowly, imperceptibly, through her happiness stole a new emotion. Not until the evening of the third day of its existence did she know its meaning or its strength. Then she knew that she loved him. That he loved her seemed to be the message of his eyes and hand and countless little things which now took shape and meaning they never had before. That night she faced—so she thought—the problem of her life. Resolutely and tearlessly she solved it. Quietly she packed her few belongings, and on the following morning bade a hurried “Good-bye” to Sybil and travelled home as fast as an express train could carry her. Not until the train stopped at the dreary station she knew so well did her lips quiver or her eyes grow dim. She resolutely conquered her feelings, and went home in an omnibus, to be told by her brother that he was glad that she had come. His succeeding remark robbed his greeting of affection in giving a reason for his gladness.

“That girl Jane is a perfect idiot, and the governor has been worse than ever!” So his greeting ended. Poor Millicent!

## II.

PASSING through an open window on to the lawn at Elston Chase is a young man with a letter in his hand. He almost collides with a young lady running hastily into the house.

“Hallo, Cis! I was coming to you. Here’s a letter just arrived by the afternoon post.” And Rupert Aynshaw handed his half-sister quite a bulky letter.

“Oh, thank you,” was the eager answer. “Why, it’s from Milly—

and a long one too, it looks. Tell Fred, will you, that I shall not be coming for some little time? Perhaps you will take my place?"

"No, thank you. Single wicket is not wildly exciting, and John Hartley has no great opinion of my cricketing powers."

"Oh, I'm getting on. He tells me my lobs are regular teasers." And away she ran.

"Women are queer," thought Rupert Aynshaw, as he watched the disappearing figure. "Fancy the mater not liking her, and having her kept at a wretched school for eight years; and if I'm not mistaken Hartley is as much surprised at the mater as I am. When Madge is present he has eyes and ears for no one else."

The second Mrs. Aynshaw was sleeping now by the side of Margaret's mother in the little churchyard of Elston, and the little girl whom the stepmother had never loved was queen of Elston Chase, and imperial mistress of every heart that beat within its walls. And no one loved her with a deeper or warmer affection than her half-brothers.

On this afternoon, as she settled herself in her own sanctum to read her friend's letter, her face was bright with light-hearted girlishness. But as she read the sunlight died from her face, and there came a look of pain which deepened into anger. She read Millicent Poole's letter a second time, and then she took two other letters from a small cabinet, read them also, and settled herself again to have what she was fond of calling "a good think." And as she thought a cold light came into her eyes, and—but this perhaps was due to the fading day—her face seemed stern. After a while she rose and went and talked to Simpson, and all the conversation was as to which were her prettiest dresses, and the possibility of packing them in few boxes. Then she wrote to Sybil Butler and told her how much she would like to see her if Sybil could do with her old friend for a few days.

So it came about that Fred drove his sister to the station on the following Tuesday, and as he did so he couldn't help remarking the number of her boxes.

"You might be going on a besieging expedition, Cis," he said.

"Perhaps I am," was the reply.

"But what on earth can be in all those trunks and boxes?"

"Ammunition, of course," laughed back his sister.

A week had passed since Miss Poole's hurried departure. Cyril had been up at Scarborough playing for *I Zingari*, and had come home to find the neighbourhood very dull. To him it seemed that everybody was away, and so too, worse luck! seemed everybody's sisters. Cyril dawdled about and wished his mother would not so unreasonably object to his going to Scotland.

He called at his cousin's one morning, making one of his informal visits, and was told that Sybil was engaged with a visitor. "One as came this morning for a week," the maid said.

Cyril remembered the others, and decided not to stay until the

concluding remark of the servant—"A Miss Aynshaw it is, sir,"—changed his hastily-formed decision.

Miss Aynshaw! He must see her, he thought, for Millicent's eulogy is fresh in his memory yet. And he saw her.

Since that day Cyril has seen many places and many people, but still as a memory of yesterday is the recollection of his meeting Margaret Aynshaw for the first time. In his far-off halting-places amidst the wildness of Western America, or the barren plains of Southern Africa, he often fashioned the scene as he saw it; the room, with its furniture growing shabby, with its general indefinable air of homeliness, with Sybil busy with her never-failing fancy-work, and the deepening sunlight falling through the open window across the corner of the room. These were but the background, the framework. The *picture*, to his mind, was the girl sitting in the easy-chair in the centre of the room. No description of her could he give, and that given by any other would be strangely incomplete. When all had been said about the regular features, the soft, dark brown eyes, the wonderful complexion, the living sunlit gold of her hair, about the changing lights which shone in those eyes, the strangely sweet smile which lit the face, and about the prettiness of her dress, and the dazzling effect of the jewels which shone from fingers, neck and hair—when all had been said one could only echo the words of Coventry Patmore's lover to his beloved:

"But, praising you, the fancy deft  
Flies wide and lets the quarry stray;  
And when all's said, there's something left,  
And that's the thing I meant to say."

Sybil greeted her cousin with a "Well, Cyril, how are you? You are quite a stranger." And the introduction over, Miss Aynshaw said:

"I am afraid I can't agree with Sybil. I have heard so much about you for years now, Mr. Daynton, that I can't look upon you as a stranger."

And she evidently did not. She led the conversation, and at first talked of nothing but his cricketing doings, displaying a knowledge of cricket history so far as it concerned the achievements of Cyril Daynton that was highly flattering to that individual.

"You know I am quite a Grace at single wicket, Mr. Daynton. Sybil says she won't play."

"No," said Sybil; "tennis is the full extent of my athletic powers."

"I hope you are not a champion at that, too, Mr. Daynton?" said Miss Aynshaw.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because I want to play with you, and I shouldn't care to if you were too good."

"Well, Mr. Pyus can beat me hollow; and I believe we reckon form by him in this neighbourhood."

"I shouldn't have thought he would play."

"He only plays for exercise—and he gets it."

"That is his church we can see from here, isn't it, Sybil?"

"Yes—St. Agnes'. It is dreadfully *high* now, Madge," said Sybil.

"The ringing of the bell will waken you each morning at half-past seven," Cyril added.

"How very nice! I like that. To begin each day in that way seems the best thing to me, and not to crowd all the church-going of our lives into Sundays. I must go."

Miss Aynshaw seemed very much in earnest, as, in fact, she was, and Cyril told himself that all the logic was on her side and that really he ought to pay greater attention to religious observances on week-days.

So, on the following morning, Madge was not at all surprised at seeing Cyril at the little church of St. Agnes'. After coming out, they talked for a while of serious commonplace topics till Madge quite irrelevantly broke out:

"Oh, how I wish Lola were here!"

"Lola!" repeated Cyril inquiringly.

"Oh, she's only my horse," said Miss Aynshaw. "You see, the freshness of the morning and the springiness of the ground beneath my feet made me long for my usual gallop."

"Let me give you a mount, Miss Aynshaw," said Cyril eagerly. "My hunters are doing nothing; by exercising one you will do me a service."

"Oh, thank you so much. It will be quite like home." And she gave him a look, for which Cyril Daynton would have given every hunter in his stables.

On the next morning the church of St. Agnes' saw neither Cyril nor Miss Aynshaw. They were careering over the country at a pace which Cyril, had he not been intoxicated with a strange new happiness, would have deemed too daring. Madge enjoyed the wild headlong gallop, and, as her pilot knew the country and she could ride well, what mattered?

Down the village street they came at a smart trot. One little urchin, in his hurry to get out of the way of the horses, stumbled and fell. He was quite clear of the horses' feet, but he cut his forehead rather badly and set up a lusty roar. In a second, Madge had alighted, raised the little fellow, and was staunching the flow of blood with her handkerchief and soothing him with the music of her voice. She carried him into the house pointed out as his home. Cyril was following till a whispered "Come for me in a quarter of an hour" turned him away to think to himself how noble a nature belonged to this girl, with her youthful enthusiasm, her reckless courage, her promptness to give assistance, her true womanly tender-

ness. He would not have been surprised had he seen how she brightened up the cottage and how happy the little fellow soon became, despite his swollen forehead—and the happiness came not altogether from the unaccustomed possession of pennies and “white ha’pennies.”

Cyril was a bit disappointed at finding Miss Aynshaw rather quiet, even petulant, during the remainder of the ride. He had thought she was not likely to be ashamed of a kind action, and it seemed as though he had been wrong; he didn’t know how the action had recalled her real nature to herself, and that Margaret Aynshaw was wanting to go home—home to play single wicket with Fred.

Cyril made it convenient to spend nearly the whole of his time at his cousin’s place, and as far as England’s weather permitted, the old programme of tennis, boating, and kindred enjoyments was carried out. And every day Cyril was venturing along a path from the further end of which there is no pleasant returning.

On the fifth evening of Miss Aynshaw’s visit he stayed to dinner, and spent the remainder of the evening in the drawing-room. Frank Butler, disappointed of his usual game of billiards with Miss Aynshaw, who included that game among her accomplishments, voted Cyril a nuisance for being so absurdly fond of music and “mooning about,” as he put it—still music ruled the evening. In point of executive ability, Miss Aynshaw was no better a musician than Grace Elroyd; but it seemed to Cyril that in her playing and singing there was a girlish unaffectedness like Amy Hatherton’s, and a strength of feeling reminiscent of Millicent Poole. Madge sang many songs, and that night, to Cyril at any rate, mere rhymes were poetry, and songs which had been deemed commonplace, sounded like messages from hearts laden with deepest feeling. She had just finished one song, and Cyril, as he moved the music from its stand, said, “Thank you, again, Miss Aynshaw. I really think that is the prettiest of them all. Will you sing this, if you are not tired?”

“Oh, yes,” she answered smiling, and then she saw the title, “Love’s Betrayal.” “Oh, no! not that one,” she added.

“Why not? I haven’t heard it,” Cyril urged.

“I don’t like it. It’s very name is false. Love couldn’t betray; if it betrayed, it couldn’t be love.”

“Oh, don’t be logical, metaphysical, or anything too clever. And do sing this.”

“Really the words are dreadfully commonplace.”

“Not as you will say them.”

“What mistakes you can make,” laughed Margaret. And Cyril wondered why the smile died so suddenly from her face as she commenced to sing. She played very softly, and sang in a low clear voice. Her fingers moved gently over the keys, and her playing gave to the simple melody a touch of pathos, of hopelessness, of longing, and the words, commonplace as they were in truth, justified Cyril’s

remark, for as she sang them they sounded far otherwise. Cyril heard them that night with sense quickened by a new emotion, and he read them afterwards in the light of a strange experience; they are burnt into his brain, and will haunt his memory for ever.

“When the sun is slowly sinking  
To its crimson western bed—  
When the glory of its setting  
O'er the wondering world is shed—  
When the twilight softly gathers  
O'er the land and o'er the sea,  
Memory wraps my soul in dreaming—  
Dreaming of the past and thee.

“Comes the vision of thy beauty,  
Comes the echo of thy song,  
And the memory of thy falseness  
To thy fairness doth belong.  
Sorrow born of love's betrayal  
Brings its bitter pain to me,  
Sitting in the twilight dreaming—  
Dreaming of the past and thee.

“Comes the wonder—Art thou happy?  
Hast thou ever thought or care  
For the heart so idly played with  
In the sunny spring-time fair?  
Still that heart is bruised and trembles  
Neath the sorrow sent to me,  
When my soul is wrapped in dreaming—  
Dreaming of the past and thee.”

As she ended, Madge rose suddenly from the piano, and said, “I cannot sing any more to-night, Mr. Daynton.” And she cleared her throat, so Cyril thought that she had begun to feel the strain upon her voice. But her reason was a different one. And Cyril Daynton has never heard her sing since then.

That night, Cyril stopped on his homeward way and looked back, over the hedgerow, at the house he had just left. He knew now that he loved Miss Aynshaw. With the knowledge came a tumult of emotions. One moment he felt that he could rush across the fields, burst into the drawing-room where Sybil and her friend would still be sitting, declare before his cousin, before the whole world if need were, his love for Miss Aynshaw, clasp her in his strong arms, and take her answer in kisses from her lips. A moment later, he would see the sin and shame of thoughts like these. Hateful it seemed so to think of one whom he should approach in lowly homage, whose hand it were a priceless privilege to touch, whose lips were the entrance to the sacred temple of a stainless soul. There came a wild regret that he could not, as they did in days of old, fight great fights and lay the crown of victory at the feet of the Queen of Beauty: that even in these days he had not done something splendid, written a

book or painted a picture over which the world might rave for generations, opened up a continent, or led forlorn hopes with a bravery never equalled. Oh, why wasn't he a dull M.P. taking his prejudices as principles, and with his opinions strangely in exact accordance with the exigencies of his own party, but still with something of reputation around him! Cyril felt he was only a dawdling do-nothing, and the prospect looked dark to him, till an idea came with more of hope in it than ever sunlight had of warmth and light.

*Perhaps she loved him!* What else meant the deep tenderness of those glances shot from upturned eyes, the interest manifested in his doings, the pleasure so openly taken in his company? Clear now was the reason of those fits of petulance, of silence, of seeming displeasure; they were but maiden opposition to the power of love. So Cyril strode homewards, a dweller in the region of air, and in that air he built fair castles, and of those castles one golden-haired girl was mistress: while in actual fact that girl was sitting talking to Sybil, and the talk was all of—Millicent Poole.

On the following morning Cyril said to his mother, who for once in a way was taking breakfast elsewhere than in bed, "Can't you make a few calls to-day, mother, and if possible arrange a small dinner party for to-morrow. Sybil and a very great friend of hers are coming."

Mrs. Daynton readily acceded. She had ideas. She knew perfectly well that Cyril meant Sybil's friend to be on view on the evening of the following day. She determined, if possible, to secure for her dinner-party—beauty, the Misses Nares; blood, the Hon. Maud Torrington; and wealth, Miss Jane Preston, so that the deluded boy should see by contrast the shortcomings of the siren who had attracted him. Mrs. Daynton was firmly convinced that all Sybil's friends were of the third-rate governess order; but when the evening of the next day came, a great surprise awaited her, and she fell in love herself with the proud and beautiful girl who came with Sybil.

Miss Aynshaw was clever, too. She knew Mrs. Daynton by repute, and so only Margaret Aynshaw, but colder and prouder than usual, appeared during the evening. Cyril was anxious and depressed as he watched the impassive face of the one visitor for whose enjoyment he cared most. He was made happy, however, by the manner of her leave-taking. There was no coldness in the smile she gave him, her hand certainly rested unresistingly in his as he pressed it with unusual warmth, and the eyes sent a message that was not all "Good-night."

When the last of the visitors had gone, Mrs. Daynton said: "Cyril, on occasions like these I feel that I am getting old. The place wants a younger mistress. Should you ever think of marrying, my son, my blessing and best wishes will be yours. Good-night." And she kissed him. In that moment Cyril knew that Miss Aynshaw had made a conquest of his mother. He stayed up late that night thinking; thinking of how he should put his love into words, vainly wishing

that his was a silvery tongue, able to tell in soft sweet accents the devotion which inspired it. Cyril lived in anticipation through the exquisite pleasure which would be his when the story had been told and she had answered "Yes;" when the dark brown eyes would be lifted to his, shining with infinite tenderness, and those dainty lips would touch his own and bring a thrill which life had never known before; when the feeling would come that the better part of himself was in another's keeping, and that something of another's goodness and greatness was his now, to help, to strengthen, and to please. That night "hard-hitting Daynton" was a dreaming boy; a great emotion had possession of his soul.

His sleep was dreamless: it knew no echoes of his waking thoughts; but with consciousness came back the delirium of the previous day. It was a lovely morning, and Cyril arrived early at his uncle's. He was in high spirits, ready for the programme of the day. He had need of high spirits, for Frank Butler joined the party and almost monopolised Miss Aynshaw's attention. Pleasure enough for one day, however, Cyril found in dreaming of the future. Through the dreams floated regrets. They were scarcely Cyril's, for he was different to the Cyril of three days before, and the old Cyril and the things he had done seemed so far off that distance softened the regret which so many of the actions called for. What great things he was going to do in the years that were to come for the sake of the girl who was to be his wife! So he sat and fashioned his future out of fancy as he watched Madge flitting through and around the old Abbey ruins, while the soft September sunlight fell in splendour over everything, kissing the cold grey stones into warmth and light, shooting through the irregular traceries of the ruined windows to sport on the grassy carpets, and glorifying into gold the browning leaves that were soon to fade and fall.

On the next day the opportunity came. Cyril can remember even now how the conversation moved to the desired point. He was standing leaning over the low balcony on the terrace, from which they could see the river. *They*—for Madge was standing by his side. They had been admiring the loveliness of the scene, and some one spoke of the Thames. The Thames flows to London; from London to Dover is but a step; when at Dover one thinks of Calais; Calais is in France; France had a Napoleon, and Napoleon was ambitious. So from talking of the river Miss Aynshaw came to ask Cyril casually, "Have you any ambition, Mr. Daynton?"

Cyril hesitated a moment, and then said quietly, "I had not, three days ago; I have now—a great, a very strong ambition: to be your husband, and to be worthy of the honour. I love you, Miss Aynshaw. Will you be my wife?"

For a moment Margaret Aynshaw in her turn hesitated. Then three voices sounded in her ears, coming from far off; but they seemed loud and vehement, and Cyril's voice had been very quiet.

He looked up at her face, and saw its gentleness die and a mocking smile play around the sometimes pretty lips. A laugh came, cold and hard.

"Really, Mr. Daynton, you are too absurd!"

Cyril looked thunderstruck.

"Do you forget," she continued hurriedly, "how a few weeks ago you went to church in the early mornings, talked of cathedrals, and played the Puritan for Amy Atherton's sake? Has the sweetness all gone from those kisses stolen from Grace Elroyd? Have you forgotten or ceased to think of all Millicent said about human misery and the need of help? I thought you liked her teaching! Don't you think, Mr. Daynton, that before you offer your heart it would be well to make quite sure that you have one? Do you expect any girl to accept a love which differs only in being spoken from that which by every look and action you have offered to countless others?"

"I—I beg your pardon," stammered Cyril. "I thought—you—cared for me."

"Choose another occupation for your idle summers, Mr. Daynton. You don't seem to enjoy your present pastime unless all the playing is on your side. I have been as much in earnest during the past few days as you were during the previous months."

Miss Aynshaw turned and walked quietly away, and Cyril stood for a while as one in a daze, and then staggered home. He was as a blind man, for the world had grown dark, and his path stretched before him wrapped in mists heavy, cold, and impenetrable.

Miss Aynshaw watched him as he went. The utter despair plainly shown in the dejection of his form did not soften her feelings towards him. But soon her gentler nature asserted itself. Two hours afterwards, as she was dressing for dinner, a note was delivered to her. The handwriting was unfamiliar, and she paused in her toilet to read and answer it. It ran:—

"DEAR MISS AYNSHAW,—As I am about to leave England for an indefinite period, and arrangements have unexpectedly and hurriedly to be made, I must ask you to excuse me from keeping whatever appointments I may have made with yourself and Sybil. I thank you for the many pleasant hours you have made for me during the past week. Good-bye. C. D.

"P.S.—Once you expressed a wish for a good dog of the mastiff or St. Bernard kind. I am sending Nixon, one of the grooms, with a young St. Bernard, which will be a fine handsome fellow in time. Will you accept it? Nixon has orders to learn whether the dog is suitable or not."

Nixon took back the message that Miss Aynshaw was very pleased with the dog.

Margaret read this letter. She read it three times—slowly, because

her eyes were growing bedimmed with tears ; then she burnt it. She watched it burn, and as the flame which destroyed it died out, a cry rose within her, "Oh, why wasn't there some other way?" and she fell across the bed and cried as though her heart were breaking. With her tears her passionate regret spent itself. Soon she recovered her old light-heartedness ; but in the after days, while Margaret Aynshaw was satisfied as to the justice of what had been, and had many a merry romp with a big St. Bernard dog, she never quite forgave herself, and never cared to think of Cyril Daynton and the lesson she had taught him.

Yet it bore good fruit. From that day Cyril was a changed man ; and as he gazes into the eyes of the beautiful young wife whom eventually he brought home, and who now makes his happiness, he confesses to himself that the lesson taught him by Margaret Aynshaw was the most wholesome of his life.

And Margaret ? Her game might have been a very dangerous one, for with all her good intentions it was playing with edged tools. But her heart had left her keeping before her visit to Sybil, and as the wife of Sir John Hartley, the most earnest and popular squire in his county, she confesses that Cyril Daynton, with all his fascinations, is the last man on whom her choice would have fallen.

W. EXFORD SAXON.

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### LOVE'S FAREWELL.

My best belov'd one ! tho' thou art so chill,  
 Thou canst not chill my love ; it is a part  
 Of my soul's soul ; it is my dearer heart,  
 Whose feverish pulses Death alone can still.  
 Love thee I must, tho' Love doth treat me ill,  
 Piercing my breast with many a cruel dart,  
 But healing it no more with rapture's thrill,  
 For thou canst leave me now, so cold thou art !

Dear love, farewell ! These thorns do pierce me sore,  
 For of Love's rose the thorns alone I reap !  
 The passion-flow'r for me hath no sweet core ;  
 Lay on my lips the crimson flow'rs of sleep,  
 The lethal poppies from a sunless shore,  
 Where the wan god of death his throne doth keep.  
 Hypnos ! thy spell shall break not as of yore,  
 And I shall sleep to dream, and wake to weep  
 'Neath thee, Oneiros, god of dreams !—no more !

ALICE MACKAY.

## MONTSERRAT.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," "MEMORIALS OF MRS. HENRY WOOD," ETC., ETC.



MONS SERRATUS IN CLOUDLAND.

WE rose up betimes one morning for the purpose of visiting Montserrat the sublime, the magnificent, and the romantic.

Early as it was, Barcelona was by no means in a state of general repose. Many of its people never seemed to go to bed at all, and some of its shops never closed. If we looked out upon the world at midnight, at three in the morning, or at five, Bodegas selling wine and bread were open to customers. The Rambla was never quite deserted. Before daylight trams began to run to and fro: the street cries soon swelled to a chorus.

Early rising is not always agreeable when wandering about the world in search of the picturesque. Perhaps you have gone to bed late overnight, tired out with running to and fro. Physical power is only half-restored when an imp of darkness enters, lights your candles, pronounces what sounds like a death-warrant. "It is five o'clock, señor. Those who wish to catch the train must get up."

It seems only five minutes since you fell asleep. "You have waked me too soon. It is two o'clock, not five," cries a drowsy voice.

"As you please, señor. Not mine the privilege to contradict you." The sarcastic imp retires. Like Mrs. Major O'Dowd, you carry a

*repeater*, and strike it. Five o'clock, sure enough, and ten minutes towards six. There is nothing for it but to buckle to. Not as a friend of ours, who once bribed another imp of darkness with half-a-crown to wake him at five o'clock. The half-crown was duly earned, but nature was stronger than purpose. "Another half-crown if you let me sleep on until eight," cried the sluggard. The imp disappeared like a flash: and our friend failed to keep a distant appointment that would have returned him some thousands a year. Of such are the men who fail in life's race.

We came down and found the hotel in the usual state of early morning discomfort: doors and windows all open; a general sweeping and uprooting; discontented servants *en déshabille*; a feeling that you are in everyone's way and everyone is in yours. Breakfast was out of the question, but tea, worth its weight in gold, was forthcoming. After a strong cup of tea Wellington might easily have won Waterloo. The omnibus rattled up.

"Take your great-coats," said the landlord, who set others the example of rising early. "You will find it cold in the mountains of Montserrat; especially if you remain the night to see the sunrise."

He forgot that we were not chilly Spaniards. Our imp of darkness, who stood by, disappeared and returned with the encumbrances. The landlord—a very different and less interesting man than our host of Gerona—wished us a pleasant journey, closed the door, and away we went under the influence of a glorious morning. The sun shone brilliantly, everything favoured us.

After some ten miles of rail the wonderful ranges of Montserrat began to show up faint and indistinct with their sharp outlines and mighty peaks. Down below, wide plains with cultivated fields and flowing undulations abounded. Sabadell, the midway station, proved a true Catalonian manufacturing town, but very different from an English town of the same nature. No smoke, no blackness of darkness, no pallid, sorrowful faces. Under these blue skies and brilliant sunshine the abundant signs of work and animation almost added a charm to the scene. To those who delight in labour, life here is a combination of romance and reality, a state of things not the least wholesome or the least to be desired.

We looked down upon many a valley well wooded with small oaks, pines and olive trees, many a hill-slope covered with vines. Approaching the mountains of Montserrat, their savage and appalling grandeur became more evident. The monastery was seen high up, reposing on a gigantic plateau with its small settlement of dependencies. Villages were scattered over the plain through which the River Llobregat took its winding way.

The train drew up at the Monistrol station. Here we left the main line for the small railway which ingeniously winds up into the mountains. Not being a crowded time of year, the train consisted of two carriages only, with an engine pushing up behind. The

outer carriage was open, and here we took seat the better to survey nature.

We were high above the plains; the train had to descend into the valley, then re-ascend into the mountains. Far down was the little town of Monistrol with its white houses. The river rushed and frothed over its weir, spanned by a picturesque stone bridge of many arches. As the train twisted and turned like a serpent, it seemed that we should every moment topple over into the seething foam and come to a violent end. But down and down we went, surely and safely, until we rolled over the bridge and felt the cool wind of the water upon our faces, and drew up at the little station amongst the white houses.

Here people from the towns spend the hot months of summer, exchanging, in this hill-enclosed valley, one species of confinement for another. It was the perfection of quiet life, no sound disturbing the air but the falling water. Not a soul was visible; the lifeless village, like Rip Van Winkle, seemed undergoing a century of sleep. We might have been a phantom train in a phantom world. Though the train stopped at the little station, no one got in or out: no one but the postman who silently exchanged attenuated letter-bags. Evidently the correspondence of this enchanted place was not voluminous. Not here were wars planned or treaties signed.

Away we went again and now began to ascend. Every moment extended our view and added to its splendour. Until recently all this had to be done by coach, a journey of many hours and courageous struggling on the part of the horses. Now the whole thing is over in three-quarters of an hour, and it is good to feel that all the hard work is done mechanically. We had never gone through a similar experience, excepting when coming down the Hex River Valley in South Africa. But in the Montserrat journey there was a far more romantic element; all the charm and glamour surrounding antiquity; all the keen human interest attached to a religious institution dating from ages past. We easily traced the old zigzag carriage road up which the horses had once toiled and struggled. Almost as zigzag was our present road which wound about like forked flashes of lightning.

The scene was almost appalling. Before us the ponderous Mons Serratus with all its cracks and fissures, seemed ready to fall and crush the earth. Its sharp fantastic peaks against the clear sky looked like the ruins of some mighty castle. The mountain rises four thousand feet high, and is twenty-four miles in circumference: a grey barren mass of tertiary conglomerate: an overwhelming amount of rock upon rock, seemingly thrown and piled against each other. In all directions are enormous cañons and gorges with precipitous ravines; one rent dividing the range having occurred, it is said, at the supreme hour of the Crucifixion. No eye has ever penetrated to the depths below.

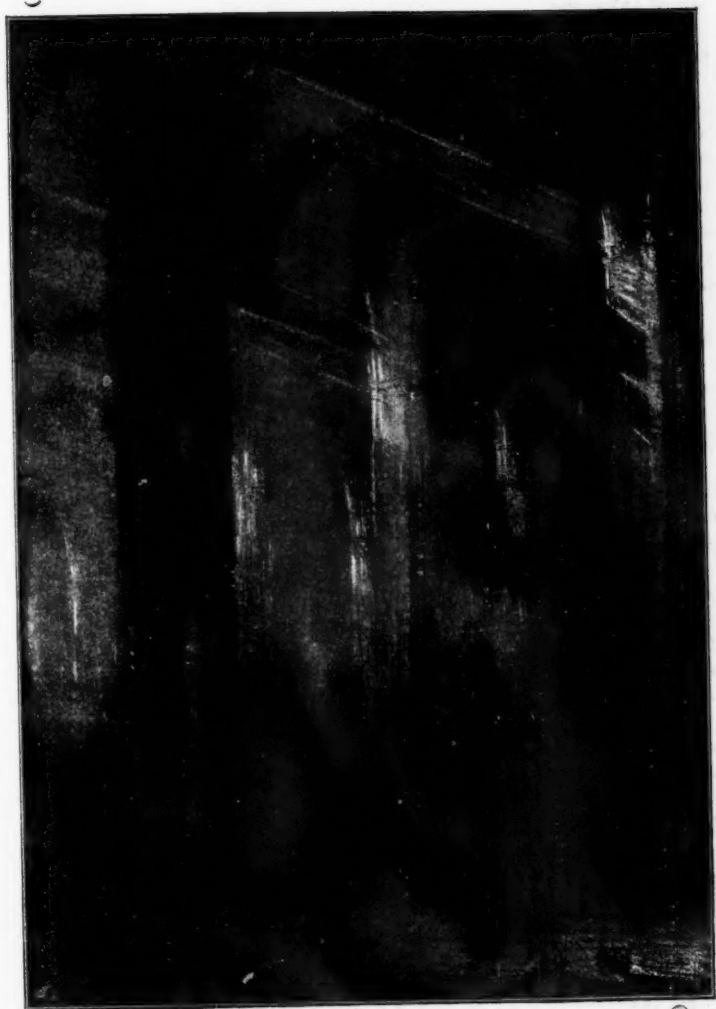
Far up the mountain reposes the monastery, with its dependencies and cultivated gardens, which we were gradually approaching. Every new zigzag and winding took us a little higher than the last. Far up we stopped at another small station. No doubt some sequestered nook held an unseen village, for again the old postman silently exchanged letter-bags.

He was a fine specimen of humanity, this "man of letters," whose grey hairs and rugged features witnessed to a long and possibly an active life. The head was cast in a splendid mould, to which the face corresponded. Such a man ought to have made his mark in the world. That he should end his days in playing postman to the monks of Montserrat seemed a sorry conclusion. The times must have got out of joint with him. As a leader in parliament or the head of some great financial house, his appearance would have guaranteed success. There must be a story behind this exterior; a mystery to unravel. But physiognomy seldom errs, and the expression of the face spoke in favour of an honest purpose.

He was a notable man; a man to be observed as you passed him on life's highway. For a time we watched him closely. There was a certain unconscious dignity about his bearing. His remarks to the conductor were much above the chatter of ordinary people. Our carriage was of the third class, though we had luxuriously taken first-class tickets; but in those small, boxed-up compartments nothing could be properly seen. The humbler carriage was large, open and airy; we could breathe, and were more in touch with our surroundings; our fellow-travellers were much more interesting than the pair of newly-married turtle-doves who occupied the luxurious compartment in a blissful *solitude à deux*.

Our companions were few and characteristic. First the conductor, who varied the monotony of his going by paying visits to the engine-driver, exchanging civilities with him and leaving the train to look after itself. Next, our postman, the study of whose nature would have been lost in any other compartment. Then a stout lady who wore a hat that was quite a flower garden, and a substantial, seven-leagued pair of boots, not at all resembling the dainty adornments that in Spain are more the rule than the exception. A large basket laden with small nicknacks was very much in evidence. To this she clung affectionately, and one felt it was all her living.

This female pedlar was on her way to Montserrat to dispose of her stock-in-trade: not to the monks, who could have no interest in house-wives and pocket-mirrors, but amongst the visitors. She was a humble peasant, yet with an honest, upright look in her dark eyes; a certain patient resignation in their expression which often comes to those who live from day to day, uncertain whether the morrow will be feast or fast. Seeing in her quiet face the traces of our common suffering humanity, the iniquity of her seven-leagued boots was forgotten. She sat at the end of the large square carriage, under the short bit of



TWILIGHT IN BARCELONA CATHEDRAL.

roofing. Here the magnificent surroundings were less seen, but what mattered? She was of those to whom the beauties of nature are a sealed influence.

Next came a military policeman duly accompanied by his gun and cocked hat, on his way to a three months' duty at Montserrat.

Thus the carriage contained a poet, who could be on occasion a Napoleon; a man of letters, though apparently of letters limited; an armed government official of more or less exalted rank; a lady merchant representing the great world of commerce; a humble individual who, like Lost Lenore, shall be "nameless here for evermore:" all personally conducted by a paid menial who neglected his duty and jeopardised the lives of his passengers. No merit to him that the journey passed without accident, but a great relief to ourselves.

Of this small group of Catalonians, our postman alone was of the higher type and by far the most interesting.

"I see you are not of our country, señor," he said to us, after exchanging letter-bags at the last station. "Your interest in the journey proves you unfamiliar with it. You may well marvel at this stupendous miracle of nature."

"We marvel at everything," we returned. "The whole scene is overwhelming. And if we may venture to say so, you are yourself an enigma. In England we have a proverb which speaks of a round man in a square hole: might it not almost be applied to you?"

"In other words," quickly returned the postman, "you pay me the compliment of saying that I magnify my office. Well, it is true that I was not born to this, but it is not everyone who has the wit to find it out. My father was an officer in the Spanish navy, and in the navy my first years of labour were spent. And now I am playing at postman—to such base uses do we come. Yet is my calling honourable.

"You would ask how I fell from my high estate, but politeness withholds the question. In reply I can only quote the old saying: *cherchez la femme*. They say that a woman is at the bottom of all mischief—and I believe it. On the other hand, there is no doubt that at her best she is a divinity. No, sir; I perceive what you would say; but I have nothing wrong or questionable to disclose; no intrigues or complications, or anything of that sort.

"My father died when I was twenty. He had been made admiral and lived to enjoy his rank just four months. Unfortunately all Admiral Alvarez had to bequeath to me was his good name. Of fortune he had none. You will say that a good name is the greatest of all inheritance, and so it is; and a young man with health and strength and a noble profession before him should be independent of fortune. I quite agree with you. But there are exceptions, and the exceptions are those who are born under a conjunction of stars against which there is no fighting. If I had lived in the days of the Egyptians, I should have been an astrologer, for I believe there is

something in the science. Right or wrong, it possesses a mysterious fascination.

"At twenty-one I married, apparently with discretion. The lady I chose was young, handsome, and owned a certain fortune. Without the latter, matrimony for me would have been a dream. My lieutenant's pay, which hardly sufficed for one, would have reduced two to the necessity of living upon love, air, or any other ethereal ingredient that may be had for nothing.

"For a time all went well. We were both well-favoured by nature—perhaps I may be allowed to speak thus of myself when life is closing in—and fortune seemed to have been equally considerate. It was, however, too good to last. As I have just said, I was not born under a lucky star. All through life I have just missed great opportunities. Even as a child I can remember that the ripe apples never fell to my share. If we drew lots for anything I was always next the winning number—I might as well have drawn the lowest. My father who really ought to have left me something in the way of patrimony, left me only his blessing.

"Well, señor, my wife, I repeat, was young and handsome. She was fond of gaiety, and having the *entrée* to a very fine society, her taste for pleasure was easily gratified. She became extravagant, and gradually fell into a state of nervous excitement which required constant dissipation. I was often away from home with my vessel, but not for long absences. They were, however, sufficiently frequent to render me careless and unsuspicious as to the true state of our finances. When I really learned this, it was too late. We were ruined. And not only ruined but overwhelmed in debt.

"In the first moment of horror, I bitterly upbraided my wife. She, poor thing, took her misfortunes and my anger so much to heart that she fell into a consumption, and in less than a year she died. I was so affected by my troubles—more I believe for the loss of my wife whom I really loved than for the loss of my income—that I fell for a time into a despondent frame of mind. I had felt compelled to retire from my profession—a man in a state of debt and bankruptcy had no right to be holding a royal commission—and my enforced idleness did not help to mend matters. At length life and health and youth—I was not yet thirty—asserted themselves. Melancholy flew away; energy, a wish to be up and doing something, returned.

"I looked around me. The prospect was a sad one. There was nothing to be done. No one wanted me.

"At length fortune tired of frowning upon me, smiled awhile. I fell in with an old friend of my father's: a wealthy coffee-planter in Ceylon. He had come over for a holiday to his native country. For the father's sake, for the sake of old times and the days of youth, he was kind to the son. He sympathised with my sorrows which were not of my own making. About to return to Ceylon, he offered me a certain partnership in his business, promising greater things if I remained.

"How thankfully I turned my back upon Spain, the land of all my misfortunes, I could never say. I began a new and prosperous life in a new country. In course of time my old friend died, and I became senior partner in a flourishing concern. For twenty-five years I remained out in Ceylon. I had made a considerable fortune, and you will think that I had probably married again. No, señor. I gave up my life to work, and would not a second time tempt fate.

"At last, after an absence of a quarter of a century, a feeling crept over me that had every symptom of *mal du pays*. As this increased, I realised my possessions and returned to my own country, a rich man. But, alas, youth had fled. Wealth did not now mean for me what it had meant at five-and-twenty. The first thing I did was to pay up all my debts with interest, and to stand a free honourable and honoured man. What surprised me most was the comparative smallness of the sum, which in the hour of our misfortunes I had thought so formidable.

"And now, señor, do you think that I could let well alone? Or rather that fortune could still turn to me a smiling face? It seemed as though the land of my birth—my mother country—was to bring me nothing but sorrow. In searching to place my capital, and remembering that you should not have all your eggs in one basket, I invested some of it in certain bank shares. It was a very flourishing concern, paying a steady nine per cent. That it should be unlimited was a matter of no importance. So prosperous a company could never fail. Yet, señor, in less than a year fail it did, for an amount which swept away every penny of my fortune and left me stranded high and dry on the shores of adversity.

"This time my ruin was more complete than before, for I was getting old and could not begin life afresh. Yet—perhaps for that very reason—I felt it less, and bore it philosophically. I had brought no one down in my reverses. There was no one to upbraid me, and more than ever I felt thankful that I had never married again. I obtained a situation in the Post Office of a light description, which would just enable me to live. Three years ago, a small windfall came to me: a sum of money that, safely invested, assures me comfortable bread and cheese for the remainder of my days. No more flourishing banks with unlimited liabilities. And now here I am, in daily charge of the mail-bags between Monistrol and Montserrat. A humble office you will say, but not ignoble. After the free life of Ceylon, with all its magnificent scenery, I felt it impossible to live shut up in a town, and specially requested this post might be given me. In the midst of this wild grandeur, which really somehow reminds me of parts of Ceylon, I am happy and contented. Bricks and mortar are my abomination; they weigh upon one's soul and crush out one's vital power. I love to breathe the morning air with the lark. At best I can live but a few years more, and I will not spend them in regretting the past. On the whole, I consider that I am rather to



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be envied than pitied. That I am no longer obliged to work for my bread gives an additional zest to my occupation.—We are approaching Montserrat. Is it not a sublime scene?"

It was indeed nothing less. We rose above the vast, magnificent valley, until at last it looked dreamlike and intangible. We seemed to overhang bottomless precipices. On a plateau of the great mountain reposed the Monastery and its dependencies. Luxuriant gardens flourished, the paradise of the monks: a strange contrast of barren rocks and rich verdure. Here dwelt a wonderful little world of its own, never deserted even in winter, and in summer crowded with people who spend here hours, days, weeks, breathing the mountain air, living a life of absolute freedom from all conventional restraint.

No monastery can be more romantically placed; perhaps none ever quite equalled it; yet of late years some of its romance and beauty has disappeared. The lovely old buildings that were a dream of Gothic and Norman refinement, of architectural perfection, have given place to new and hideous outlines. Nothing remains to show the beauty of what has been but one side of a cloister through whose pointed arches you gaze upon a perfect Norman doorway: a dream-vision. A railway has brought Montserrat into touch with the world, and to accommodate the crowd of visitors a new Hospederia has been built containing 1000 rooms, resembling an immense and very ugly prison. The passages are long, dark, narrow and cold. Rooms open on each side; single rooms and sets of rooms. The latter are furnished with a kitchen; so that a family, or a party of friends may come here with bag and baggage, pots, pans and all kitchen equipage, servant included, and encamp for as long or as short a time as may please them.

Our train stopped at the little station under the very shadow of the mountain. This was the more crowded part of the settlement, and on the left we noticed what looked like a party of gipsies encamped, enjoying an open air feast with much laughter and merriment. The monastery buildings were at the other end of the plateau.

We left the station under the pilotage of our friend the postman, carrying his mail-bag. Before us, raised on a terrace, was a long row of buildings, old and new, of every shape and size. These were the dependencies, and helped to form the little world of Montserrat. Towering behind, up into the skies, were the precipitous sides and peaks and pinnacles of the great mountain.

"There lies the Post office," said our man of letters, "and that is my destination. If you have any intention of remaining the night, you should first pay a visit to that little house on the right. The funny little monk who attends to visitors will receive you, conduct you to the Hospederia and give you rooms. In summer every room is often occupied to overflowing, but now you will have the place to yourselves: you and the ghosts—for I maintain that it is haunted. I will not say farewell, señor; we shall frequently

meet during the day. There is small choice of ways in this little settlement."

We turned to the right and entering the building indicated, passed into a bare, unfurnished room. Through a square hole in the wall, like a buttery-hatch, a monk's face peered at us with large, coal-black eyes, quite startling in their effect: a small spare monk, with an unshaven face, a round head and black hair, habited in the ugly dress of the Jesuit order. It struck us rather unpleasantly that everything about him was black, not the eyes and hair only. He evidently belonged to a sect who thought washing sinful, or at least superfluous.

"Ah!" he exclaimed in quite friendly tones. "Welcome to Montserrat! I am very happy to see you."

"We might be the oldest of friends," said H. C., shuddering as the well-disposed ecclesiastic put forth a very dusky hand. We saw it coming and meanly put H. C. in the foreground, and in spite of his Napoleon manner he had to shake it. The little monk was not to be frowned down.

"I am very happy to see you," he repeated. "You are welcome. Our visitors are few at this time of the year. Every visitor adds his quota to our common fund. However small, it is acceptable. Do not think me mercenary. The fathers and brothers must live, and they do a great deal of good. Even up here, out of the world, you have no idea how much may be done. And we have many branches. But the beauty of Montserrat is supreme, and you know that it is world-wide. Now you want rooms," continued the eloquent little monk. "I will go across with you to the Hospederia. But first you must record your names in this book. Miguel," to a young man in attendance, "where are the keys? They are not here. Why are they not here? How often am I to report you to the Father Superior for carelessness?"

The keys were guiltily produced by Miguel.

"I thought so," cried the monk. "Suppose, now, you had gone down to Monistrol with the keys in your pocket! We must have got in through a window, like thieves and vagabonds. A very undignified proceeding. The Reverend Father would have stopped your butter for a month. As it is, I must overlook it, I suppose—you are so very fond of butter. Now, gentlemen,—dear me, what beautiful writing you English always have"—scanning the book, in which with the aid of a very bad pen we had clumsily scratched our names—"Now, gentlemen, I am at your service. We will take our little pilgrimage. You have a choice of rooms. There is not a soul in the Hospederia. Miguel, attend us; you will have to make up beds for these gentlemen."

The pilgrimage was certainly a short one. We gave the little monk as wide a berth as politeness and the way permitted. To keep step with him was impossible. He had a curious motion which

resembled more the trotting of a young colt than the walk of a human being. As he skipped across the road, a small animated mass of quicksilver, full of a peculiar life and energy, it was difficult to keep a becoming gravity. The great Hospederia was in front of us, huge, modern, unsightly, depressing. The monk jingled the great keys, as though they made pleasant music in his ear. Then he applied one of them to the huge lock, and the heavy door revolved on its hinges.

If the exterior had looked depressing, it was cheerfulness itself to the interior. A chilling, silent, uninhabited, ghostly atmosphere met us at the very threshold. Our postman might well say it was haunted. Voices and footsteps echoed in the long, bare, gloomy corridors. A monk's cell could scarcely have been more destitute of comfort. We had hardly made up our minds whether to stay the night or not, and our proposed lodging kept us still more undecided. As far as sunrise was concerned, at this time of the year the effects were doubtful. More often than not a thick mist enshrouded the whole visible world like a white sea. We might remain and have our trouble and discomfort for our pains, and nothing more.

"Here," said the monk, throwing open the door of a small room, and pointing to a bed as hard as pavement, "you may sleep in comfort, even luxury. And," opening the window, "what a prospect!"

This was true enough as regarded the outlook. Such an assemblage of vale and mountain and river could hardly be surpassed. The luxury of the bed on the other hand, was a distinct effort of the imagination. We would not, however, disturb the sensitiveness of the little monk by arguing the matter, and indeed it would have been difficult to lower his self-complacency. Two rooms belonging to a suite were duly apportioned to us. The bare kitchen between them looked cold and lifeless. These rooms would be prepared, and any one remaining here for the night might reasonably consider it a penance for his sins. It would be rather a gruesome experience to find ourselves in sole possession of this vast building of 1000 rooms. An army of ghosts—the ghosts of dead-and-gone monks—would certainly come down upon us, and H. C.'s most Napoleon manner a hundred times exaggerated, and with a hundred umbrellas would have no effect upon them whatever. Like the little monk, ghosts were not to be frowned down.

"A pity to disturb this Hospederia," we remarked, "which may be considered closed for the season. My friend Telemague is very much afraid of ghosts, and this place might very well be haunted. It is certainly haunted by silence. Why not give us cells in the monastery, where, in presence of the Father Superior, ghosts would hardly venture to intrude?"

"An excellent idea," said H. C., who looked blue and cold, as if the heart had gone wrong again. "This place is more gloomy than the grave."

"In the darkness one place is very much the same as another,"

said the monk. "No one is allowed even within the walls of the monastery without an order from the Holy Father at Rome, the Archbishop of Toledo, or some equally great authority. Father Salvador is the only one who can prevail with our Superior. As for ghosts, I have seen them with my own eyes on All Souls' Eve,



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at midnight, in the monastery graveyard, and oh! how frightened I was! How I shivered in my sandals! It was the ghosts of two monks who had committed suicide within a year of each other in their cells. Of course they were quite mad, and they left a letter behind them—both of them—to say they could bear the solitude

no longer. In the dead of night they heard groans and saw shapes like immense bats flying about. Each bat had four wings and two tails, fiery eyes and forked tongues. Quite insane they were. But there are no ghosts here, sirs. For the matter of that, the building is far too modern. Ghosts have excellent taste and cultivate the antique. There, that is settled. Everything is at your disposal—the whole building. Now, Miguel, show the gentlemen where they can dine. I have heard that the fare in the restaurant is quite equal to anything in Madrid. I am your most humble servant and delighted to see you. Welcome to Montserrat."

Upon which the little monk skipped once more across the road with the same acrobatic motion, and disappeared within his sanctum.

Under Miguel's escort—who had had so narrow an escape from losing his butter and doing a month's fasting out of Lent—we found the dining-room. Several dining-rooms indeed, of great size, one above another, apparently quite prepared to entertain the Hospederia with its full complement of guests. The manager informed us that we could have any meal we liked at any appointed hour; he was equal to the largest dinners at the shortest notice; and having settled this part of the programme to H. C.'s complete satisfaction, we dismissed Miguel and took to exploring.

As Don Alvarez had said, we could not go very far wrong. One road led to the summit of Mons Serratus, another down into the world; a third round the mountain into another part of the world. This was still traversed by a coach and four, and presently we had the pleasure of seeing it start with great preparation and ceremony. For the moment we contented ourselves with the immediate precincts.

The convent buildings stood on a plateau at the far end of the settlement. Almost buried under the side of the mountain was the immense church or chapel in which the monks attend mass. One may see them at stated hours in the choir behind the great iron grille that separates them from the outside worshippers. There are now only about twenty fathers, for the monastery was suppressed some sixty years ago: only a few being allowed to remain. It is of very ancient origin, and rose from small to great things, and again has fallen away from its high estate. The foundation is due to a black image of the Virgin; a small figure in black wood supposed to have been specially carved by St. Luke, and specially brought to Spain by St. Peter. If it is done in St. Luke's best style, he was certainly not a Michel Angelo. The image, however, is highly prized by the religious order, as having worked countless miracles and brought them fame and wealth.

In crossing towards the Chapel we met our funny little monk. "Ah, you are going into the church," he cried. "You will find the fathers at prayer—it is nearly the hour for going into the refectory. And you will see the black Virgin—the beautiful black image—carved by St. Luke—carried by St. Peter—blessed by twelve popes! No

wonder she performs miracles. Withered arms and legs come to life again. I have seen old people turn young. Once when I looked at her she blinked with both eyes. It is true I am shortsighted, but I am certain of the fact: as certain as that I saw ghosts in the graveyard on All Souls' Eve. Señor, that wonderful black image is the one great thing to see at Montserrat. The cleverness of the railway, the beauty of the landscape, the grandeur of the mountain, the splendour of the church—all this is very well in its way; but it is as nothing compared with the black image. Go and study it, and if you look long enough perhaps she will blink her eyes at you too, or bow her head. It is quite possible."

Upon which he skipped through the quadrangle back to his den.

This quadrangle was very interesting; large, quiet and solidly built: an outer court to the holy of holies, which was the church itself. Under the mountain side, its covered passages ever seemed in deep gloom and shadow; a death-in-life atmosphere hung about it. In days gone by it was one of the loveliest nooks in the world, for the ancient buildings were beautiful and refined. Gothic cloisters and Norman doorways mingled their outlines in close companionship, without rivalry, and the beholder was charmed at finding himself in a perfect element where nothing jarred.

All has disappeared to make way for the modern traveller, whose name is legion. Nothing remains but the one little Gothic fragment, with its pointed windows and slender shafts. A lady in a mantilla graced them as we stood looking through them at the Norman archway beyond: the more interesting of the two turtle doves who had travelled up with us from Monistrol. Her mate was attending to the vulgar side of life, arranging a select repast with the manager at the restaurant at the further end of the settlement. We saw him come out and advance towards her with that degree of *empressement* which generally marks the *lune de miel*. She too went to meet him half way—and they disappeared out of our lives.

As we looked at the Norman doorway it was suddenly filled with the figure of a monk. Nothing could have been more appropriately romantic and picturesque. He was clothed not as a Jesuit, but in the far more becoming dress of a Franciscan. His cowl was thrown back, revealing a pale, refined face, and a well formed head, on which the hair seemed to be arranged almost like a circlet of leaves—the crown of the poet. He stood still and motionless as though carved in stone. In his hand he held a breviary. A girdle was round his waist, confining the long brown robe. As far as we could see, he appeared unmindful of his surroundings, lost in a dreamy gaze which penetrated beyond the skies. It was the attitude and expression of a visionary or a mystic.

What was this monk in the strange garb? Who was he? What brought him apparently at home amidst the Jesuits, he who evidently belonged to another order? Had he thrown in his lot amongst

them? Or did he live, a solitary being, in one of the surrounding hermitages?

Whilst we looked, he slowly turned, and with bent head and lingering steps, as though in deep contemplation, passed out of sight. Nothing remained but the empty doorway with a vision of arches beyond; a few ruined walls stained with the marks of centuries, to which patches of moss and drooping creepers and hardy ferns added grace and charm. We were alone, surrounded by intense quiet and repose. Sunshine was over all, casting deep shadows. No sound disturbed the stillness; not even the echo of the monk's receding footsteps. So silent and motionless had been his coming and going we asked ourselves whether he was in truth flesh and blood or a mid-day visitor from the land of shadows. How remote, how out of the world it all was!

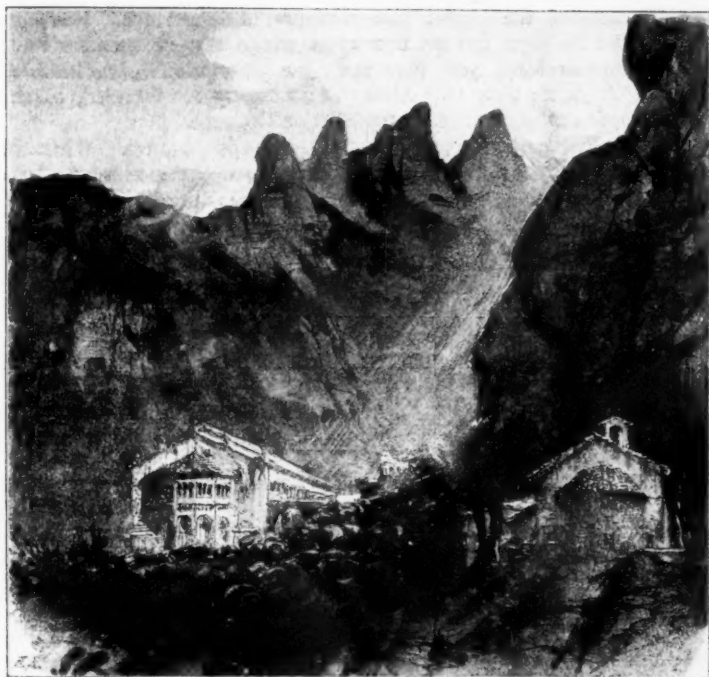
Suddenly, as we looked upwards, an eagle took majestic flight from one of the mountain peaks, and hovering in the blue ether, seemed seeking for prey. But it was not the time of the lambs, and with a long sweeping wing it passed across the valley to an opposite range of hills, unsatisfied.

The great church was before us with its dome, of Roman design and sufficiently commonplace. But after all, what mattered? Its effects and those of the hideous Hospederia were lost in their wonderful surroundings; seeming but as a drop of water to the ocean.

On entering the church this comparison disappeared. There was an expanse about its aisles, a largeness and breadth in the high-domed roof, that produced a certain dignity, yet without grace and refinement. No magic and mystery surrounded them, and the dim religious light was the result not of rich stained glass admitting prismatic streams, but of an obscurity cast by the shadows of Mons Serratus. For great effects one had to go back in imagination to the days when the monks were many and assembled at night for service. It is easy to picture the impressive scene. Beyond the ever-closed screen, within the great choir, a thousand kneeling, penitential figures, chanting the midnight mass, their voices swelling upward in mighty volume; the church just sufficiently lighted to lend the utmost mystery to the occasion; a ghostly hour and a ghostly assemblage of men whose lives have become mere shadows of the reality. On great days countless candles lighted up the aisles, and faintly outlined the more distant recesses. The fine-toned organ pealed forth its harmony shaking the building with its diapasons and awakening wonderful echoes in the far-off dome.

All this may still be seen and heard now and then, but with the number of monks sadly curtailed. It is said that they now never exceed twenty. When their day of persecution came they escaped to their mountain fastness, climbing higher and ever higher like hunted deer, hiding in the cracks and crevices of the rocks; fear giving them strength to reach parts never yet trodden by the foot of man; whilst

many a less active monk slipped and fell into the bottomless abyss, his last resting place, like that of Moses, remaining for ever unknown. The troops of Suchet followed the refugees and found them out, and put an end to many a life that if useless was also harmless. Not a few of the survivors became hermits, and on many a crag may be found the ruins of a hermitage once, perhaps, inhabited by a modern St. Jerome: though the St. Jeromes of the world have probably been few and far between.



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Some sort of religious institution existed here in the early centuries, long ages before Ignatius Loyola founded the order of the Jesuits. In the eighth century the famous black image was hidden away in a cave under a hill, to save it from the Moors. Here it miraculously disclosed itself a hundred years later to some simple shepherds. These hastened to the good bishop, who took his mules, his crook and mitre, and came down with all the lights of the church and all the pomp of his office to remove the treasure to Manresa.

Apparently the image preferred the fresh mountain air to the

close, torrent-washed town with its turbid waters, for having reached a certain lovely spot overlooking the vast plain, it refused to go any further. As it could not speak—being a wooden image—it made itself so heavy that mortal power could not lift it. This was the first of a long succession of miracles. On the spot where the image rested the Bishop with crook and mitre, and bell and book, and Dean and Chapter, held solemn conclave and there and then went through a service of Consecration. A chapel was built, and the image became the object of devoted pilgrimages.

All traces of the chapel have disappeared long since. Nothing now marks the spot but an iron cross which may be seen far and near. Approaching, you may read the inscription: *Aquí se hizo inmovil la Santa Imagen*. After this a nunnery was founded, which in the tenth century became a Benedictine Convent.

Ages rolled on, and it grew famous and sought after. When it was destroyed by the French it held as many as 900 monks: a great religious community, wealthy and powerful. But the mighty are fallen. The few remaining monks, more exclusive in their retirement than the great body of their predecessors, have a school attached to the monastery in which much time is given to the study of music. It is going far out of the world for instruction, but Nature herself should come to their aid. Amidst these lonely solitudes, the Harmony of the Spheres might well be heard and become a faithful teacher.

Passing through the great quadrangle, we entered a narrow passage between the church and the hill-side, reminding one a little of some of the narrow streets of Jerusalem. Here too, we found some arches and buttresses framing-in the sky; arch beyond arch. At the end of all we came out once more upon the open world. What a scene was disclosed!

In front of us was a small chapel attached to a little hermitage. Beside it ran a long avenue of sad and solemn cypresses. It might have been the cemetery of the dead-and-gone monks, but no small mounds or wooden crosses marked the spot where the dead repose. This mournful avenue extended to the brow of the hill, where we overlooked vast wild precipices. Cañons and gorges opened beneath us and above us in appalling magnitude. The stupendous valley stretched right and left in the distance. Far on the other side reposed a chain of snow-clad hills. Villages lay about the plain and hill-sides. In the far-off hollow slept the little town of Monistrol, its blue smoke mingling with the clearer atmosphere. Through all the valley the river ran its winding, silvery course on its way to the sea.

The plateau on which we stood held the monastery buildings. Near us stretched the gardens of the monks in cultivated terraces, and above them, winding round the mountain was the white road leading out into the world lying to the south of Montserrat. Again, as we looked, another eagle soared from one of the peaks and took its slow majestic flight across the valley, no doubt on the track of

its mate, perhaps to find out why he tarried so long. A long string of boys in caps and black cloaks left the convent and wound round the white road, conducted by a few of the monks whose duty it was to keep watch and ward over the students. These passed out of sight, and once more we seemed alone with nature.

But on turning back down the cypress avenue, sitting against the little chapel we saw the Franciscan monk who had lately filled the Norman archway. Though his breviary was open, he was not reading. His eyes—large, dark, dreamy eyes that ought to belong to a genius—were looking out upon the mountain and the far-off sky, lost in profound contemplation.

Of what nature were his thoughts? Introspective or retrospective? Was he thinking of days that were passed, or of the life to come? Were regret and remorse his portion, or resignation to his present surroundings? Was he dwelling upon some terrible Might-have-been? He looked inexpressibly lonely, as though he and the world had parted company for ever, but there was something singularly interesting about him. It seemed difficult to intrude upon his solitude, as impossible to pass without speaking.

Some mesmeric influence compelled us to stop. His face was pale and refined. He was so thin as to be almost cadaverous; not an ounce of flesh had he to spare on his bones; there was a certain look of hunger in his large magnificent eyes; not a hungering after the flesh-pots of Egypt, but, as it seemed, for peace of mind and repose of soul. As he gazed at the skies he appeared to be asking questions of the Infinite Beyond. Where was the Kingdom of Heaven and what was it like? When there came for him the great apocalypse of the soul how would it find its way to the realms of paradise?

We stopped in front of him, and he suddenly started as though he had only that moment become aware of our presence. He did not seem to resent the intrusion, but looked up with a searching inquiring gaze, which presently changed to a smile beautiful and almost childlike in its confidence: sad, beseeching, as though it were in our power to interpret to him the hidden mysteries of the unseen; the perplexing problems of life; the doubts and difficulties with which his questioning heart contended.

"You have indeed found a quiet corner for contemplation," we remarked after he had greeted us with a subdued: "May Heaven have you in its holy keeping."

"It is all my want and all my desire," he replied, in a voice that was full of melody. "I live the life of a hermit. Near at hand I have my small hermitage, and I also have my cell in the monastery, occupying the one or the other as inclination prompts me. For you see by my dress that though this is my home, where I shall live and die, I do not belong to the Jesuits. I am really a Franciscan, but I have obtained a dispensation and I live here. I love to con-

template these splendours of nature ; to read my breviary under the blue sky and the shadow of our great mountain. Here I feel in touch with heaven. The things unseen become real and tangible, doubts and difficulties vanish. My soul gathers strength. I return to my cell and its walls crush all life and hope out of me ; weigh upon me with an oppression greater and deeper than that of yonder giant height. I feel as though I should die, or fall away from grace. There have been times when they have come to my cell and found me unconscious. I have only revived when they have brought me out to the fresh air, this freedom and expanse. The good Father Superior recognises my infirmity and has given me the hermit's cave. I will show it to you if you like. It is quite habitable and not what you might imagine, for it is a built-up room with light and air, not a cavern dark and earthy. I love solitude and am never solitary. Once I loved the world too much ; I lived in the fever of life and dissipation. Heaven had mercy upon me, and you behold a brand plucked from the burning. When my heart was dead and seared, and love and hope and all things beautiful had taken wing, I left the world. The profligate became a penitent. I took vows upon me and joined the Franciscan Order. But I should have died if I had not come up here, where I have found pardon and peace. That was twenty years ago. Yet I am not fifty years old, and am still in the full vigour of manhood. It may be long before a small wooden cross marks my resting-place in the cemetery. When the last hour comes I shall pray them to bring me here, that amidst these splendours of nature my soul may wing its flight to the greater splendours of paradise. I feel that I could not die in my cell."

"How is it you are allowed so much freedom?" we asked. "We thought that here you were all more or less cloistered. It was our desire to see the interior of the monastery, but the lay monk who receives visitors said it was not permitted."

"It is a strict rule," returned the monk ; "but if you are staying here a couple of days, I could take you in. To-morrow is a great fast : to enter would be impossible : the day after it might be done."

"Unhappily we cannot remain," we said. "To-morrow at latest we must return to Barcelona. But, if we may ask it again without indiscretion, whence have you this indulgence, this power?"

"The secret lies in the fact that I possess a talent," smiled the monk. "I was always passionately fond of music, and as a pastime studied it closely and earnestly. Here I have turned it to account. Whether it was the necessity for an occupation, or that it was always in me, I developed a strange faculty for imparting knowledge to others. I fire them with enthusiasm and they make vast progress. My name I am told has become a proverb in our large towns. It has been of use to the monastery ; has enlarged the school, added to the revenues. In return I have obtained certain privileges ; a greater freedom of action. Otherwise my power would leave me.



BEAUTY AND DECAY.

This is why I can promise to open doors to you that are usually closed to the world. Yet in what would you be the better? Curiosity would hardly be satisfied in viewing the bare cells and long, gloomy passages, the cold and empty refectory, where perchance you might see spread out a banquet of bread and water, a little dried fish or a few sweet herbs."

"There is always something that appeals to one, something strangely attractive, in the interior of a monastery," we returned.

"I know it," replied the monk, whose new name he told us was Salvador. "It is a world apart and savours of the mysterious. It possesses also a certain mystic element. Thus the atmosphere surrounding it is romantic and picturesque, appealing strongly to the imagination. Sympathy goes out to the little band of men who have bound themselves together by a vow, have forsaken the world and given up all for religion. But if you were called upon to share that life for only a month, all its supposed mystery and charm would disappear. It only exists in the sentiment of the thing, not in the reality. It lies in the beauty of the solitary mountains in which the monasteries are often placed; or the splendid architecture they occasionally preserve. In the dull monotony of a daily round never varied, you would learn to dread the lonely cell—even as I once dreaded it more than death itself. Hence my freedom. It will soon be our refectory hour," he said, looking at a small silver watch he carried beneath his cloak. "I must return or fast."

Then there came to us a bright idea. "Why leave us?" we said. "Or if you must do so now, why not return? Would you not be allowed to dine with us this evening? You would tell us of your past life before you became a monk, and of your life since then. It must contain much that is interesting. In the evening shadows you would guide us about the mountain paths, and tell us of the evil days that fell upon the monks and their flight into the hills."

Salvador the monk smiled. "You tempt me sorely," he replied. "I should like it much. Such a proposal has never been made to me since I put on cloak and cowl. It would be like a short return to the world; a backward glance into the life that is dead and buried. Then imagine the contrast between your sumptuous repast and the bread and sweet herbs with which we keep our bodies alive. I fear it would not be wise to awaken memories. No, I must not think of it. But to-night I shall dream that I have been to a banquet and walked with you in quiet paths, taking sweet counsel. Oh, I am tempted. What a break in my life to spend a whole day with you, and become once more a citizen of the world, as it were! But I will make a compromise. If you go up the mountain to-morrow morning to see the sun rise, I will accompany you. Though a fast day, I can do this; and I may take a modest breakfast with you."

This decided us and we agreed to remain. To deny him would have been cruel. He folded his camp-stool and prepared to depart.

"You will accompany me to my door," he said, somewhat wistfully, "though to-day I may not ask you to pass beyond."

So we wended back through the arches in the narrow passage between the hill and the monastery, and the mountain shadows fell upon us. We reached the great quadrangle, lonely and deserted.

"Let us enter by way of the church," said the monk; "I will show you our little private door."

The great building was silent and empty. Our footsteps woke weird echoes in the distant aisles. Salvador by some secret touch unfastened the door of the screen which rolled back on its hinges, and we passed into the choir.

"Here we attend mass," said our guide; "a small community of monks; though I am more often at the organ. In days gone by when they numbered nearly 1000, it was a splendid and powerful institution, a magnificent sight and sound. No need then to add to the funds by teaching. All the glory has departed, but perhaps, in return, we are more useful. Nothing, however, can take from our scenery, though its repose is no longer unbroken. With a railroad at our very doors, who can say that we are now out of the world? Ah!" as a man crossed the choir towards the sacristy, "there is my organ-blower. Would you like me to give you some music?"

"It would be enchanting," we replied; "but your repast—would you not lose it?"

"I have a quarter of an hour to spare," he answered. "I should then still be in time for the end." He beckoned to the man, who approached. "Johann, have you dined?" he asked.

"Sí, señor."

"Then come and blow for me a little."

He bade us seat ourselves in the stalls, where the organ was best heard. We listened to their receding footsteps ascending the narrow winding staircase leading to the organ loft. In a few minutes we had lost all sense of outward things. The loveliest, softest, most entrancing music went stealing through the great building. Salvador was evidently extemporising. All his soul was passing into melody. Divine harmonies succeeded each other in one continual flow. It was music full of inspiration, such as few mortals could produce: fugitive thoughts more beautiful by reason of their spontaneity than any set composition ever given to the world. Here indeed was a genius.

Never but once before had we heard such playing. Twenty years had gone by since that evening on the Hardanger Fjord, when we glided through the water under the moonlight and listened to such strains as Beethoven himself could not have equalled. Many a hand oft-clasped in those days lies cold and dead; life has brought its disillusionings; the world has changed; but even as we write the glamour of that moonlight night surrounds us, those matchless strains still ring in our ears, lifting us once more into paradise.

This monk's music brought back all those past impressions ; "all the sorrow and the sighing, all the magic of the hour." We listened spell-bound, enraptured ; and again we were in paradise. No wonder he inspired his pupils to accomplish the impossible. It lasted only a quarter of an hour, but during that time we never stirred hand or foot, scarcely breathed. Ordinary life was suspended ; we were conscious only of soul and spirit. When this divine influence ceased we were hardly aware of the silence that succeeded. The monk had thrown us into a trance from which it was difficult to awaken. Only when his cloaked and cowed figure once more entered the choir and quietly approached us did we rouse to a sense of outward things.

"I see my music has pleased you," he said. "I do not affect to depreciate its power, since it influences me no less than others. For the time being I am lost to myself. All my soul seems expressing thoughts that words could never utter. No credit is due to me for a power outside and beyond me. The moment I sit down to the organ Saint Cecilia takes possession of me, and I merely follow whither she leads. Oh, of all arts, it is the most divine. Now before we separate let me take you into the Chapel of the Virgin. The image, you know, is considered the great treasure of the monastery."

In his voice there almost seemed an inflexion of doubt or amusement. "And you also look upon it in this light?" we asked. "You believe in all the miracles, all the legends and traditions time has gathered round the image?"

"I must not talk heresy," smiled the monk ; "but I believe more in my music."

We had entered the small chapel, where a light was burning before the celebrated image, black and polished as though of ebony : an image less than two feet high, seated in a chair, with an infant in its arms. The workmanship was rough and rude, the face ugly and African in type. There was nothing about it to raise the slightest emotion, for it was not even artistic.

"On this very spot," said the monk, "Ignatius Loyola is said to have waited for hours in rapture watching the image and receiving manifestations : after which he founded the order of the Jesuits. He laid his sword upon the altar, declaring that he had done with it for ever, and henceforth his life should be devoted to paths of peace. In like manner I have stood here for hours, waiting for inspiration, for some manifestation, some token, though it should be only borne in upon the mind without outward and visible sign. And I have waited in vain. Nothing has ever come to me. But I seat myself at the organ and seem at once to be wafted into realms immortal ; my soul awakens and expands ; I feel heaven within me. It is my one happiness and consolation ; that and being alone with nature."



SALVADOR THE MONK.

He conducted us back to the screen.

"Then we cannot prevail upon you to be with us this evening?" we said in a final effort. "You will not give us all the experiences of your past life, spiritual and practical?—all you went through in your transition state?"

"Tempt me not, tempt me not," returned the monk. "Your voice would persuade me against my reason. I must not return to the sweets of the world even for an evening. Think of the going back afterwards. But to-morrow morning before dawn breaks in the east I will be with you."

He bade us farewell and closed the gate. We watched the solitary figure glide down the choir until it disappeared. The quiet footsteps ceased to echo, and we stood alone in the church. The silence was painful and the building had no power to charm. We passed out to the great quadrangle and soon found ourselves in a very different scene.

It was the other end of the settlement. All the houses were behind us; the railway station was in a depression at our left. The plateau expanded, forming a small mounting refuge, sheltered and surrounded by great boulders that formed a part of Mons Serratus towering beyond them. Grass and trees grew in soft luxuriance. Under their shadow a picnic party had encamped: noisy Spaniards who looked very much like gipsies; an incongruous element in these solemn solitudes, yet a very human scene. They were scattered about in groups, and the bright handkerchiefs of the women formed a strikingly picturesque bit of colouring. Baskets of rough provisions were abundant. A kettle hung on a tripod and a fire burnt beneath it, from which the blue smoke curled into the air and lost itself in the branches of the trees. The people were enjoying themselves to their hearts' content. Here and there a couple had hoisted a red or green umbrella, which afforded friendly opportunities for tender love passages. Some were drinking curiously out of jars with long spouts shaped like a tea-kettle. These they held up at arm's length and cleverly let the beverage pour into their mouths. Practice made perfect and nothing was wasted. Chatter and laughter never ceased. They were of humble rank, which ignores ceremony; and when H. C. approached rather nearly, he was at once invited to join their festive board and make one of themselves.

One handsome, dark-eyed maiden looked at him reproachfully as he declined the honour—the astral body of Lady Maria in her severest aspect having luckily presented itself to his startled vision. The syren had a wonderfully impressive language of the eyes, and it was evident that her hand and heart were at the disposal of this *preux chevalier*.

"Señor," she said, "I am a teller of fortunes. Show me your hand and I will prophecy yours."

H. C. obligingly held it out. She studied it intently for about

half a minute, then raised her eyes—large languishing eyes—and seemed to search into the very depths of his.

"Señor, you are a great poet," she said. "Your line of imagination is strongly influenced by the line of music, so that your thoughts flow in rhyme. But the line of the head communicates with the line of the heart, and this runs up strongly into the mount of Venus. You have made many love-vows and broken many hearts. You will do so again. You cannot help it. You are sincere for the moment, but your affections are like champagne. They fiz and froth and blaze up like a rocket, then pass away. You will not marry for many years. Then it will be a lady with a large fortune. She will not be beautiful. She will squint and be a little lame and have a slight hump—you cannot have everything—but she will be amiable and intellectual. I see here a rich relative, who is inclined in your favour. It is in her power to leave you wealth. Beware how you play your cards. I see by your hand that you just escape many good things by this fickle nature. I warn you against it, but I might as well tell the wind not to blow. There is one thing, however, may save you—the stars were in happy conjunction at your birth. The influence of the house of Saturn does not affect you. I see little more at present. Much of your future depends on yourself. To you is given, more than to many, the controlling of your fate. You may make or mar your fortune. No, señor," as H. C. laughed and tried to glide a substantial coin into her hand, "I do not tell fortunes for money to-day. It is a festa with our tribe, almost a sacred day, the anniversary of a great historical event. To-day we do all for love; but I should much like your photograph."

H. C. chanced to have one in his pocket-book, which he had once put aside for the Madrid houri who married the Russian nobleman. The reader will remember the tragic incident. This he presented with much grace to the enraptured Sybil. Their heads were very close together at the moment; there seemed a clicking sound in the air. We happened to be consulting our watch, and on looking up, the Sybil's face seemed flushed and conscious, and H. C.'s poetically pale complexion had put on a delicate pink. This was a little too suspicious—even to our unsuspecting mind—and with a hasty bow to the interesting assembly, and wishing them all good appetites and fair fortunes, we went on our way. Looking back once, the charming Sybil was still gazing towards us with a very sentimental expression, whilst H. C. for the next ten minutes fell into silence.

The day wore on to evening. We watched the shades of night gathering over the vast valley and distant hills. Everything grew hazy and indistinct and finally gave place to a world of darkness and mystery. The outlines of Mons Serratus loomed upwards against the night sky. The stars came out, flashing and brilliant as they travelled along in their awful and majestic silence. The great constellations were strongly marked. Here and there lights twinkled in

the monastery, and in the various houses of the settlement. Where the gipsy party had encamped silence and solitude now reigned. A black mark told where the tripod had held the kettle and betrayed what had been. The whole encampment had returned to the lower world by the evening train. We had watched them enter a special carriage, which they filled to overflowing. Their spirits had not failed. As the train moved off they sent up a shout which echoed and re-echoed in many a gorge and cleft. Presently, when the stars had travelled onwards, we felt it was time to disappear from the world for a season. We were taking a last look at the Gothic arches, through which the sky and the stars shone with serene repose. The night was solemn and impressive; a strange hush lay upon all. It might have been a dead universe, only peopled by the spirits of the dead-and-gone monks and hermits roaming the mountain ranges. Throughout the little settlement not a soul crossed our path; doors and windows were closed; here and there a light still glimmered. We caught sight of another wandering light far up a mountain path. It must have been held by some one well acquainted with his ground: perhaps a last surviving hermit taking his walks abroad; or a monk contemplating death and eternity in this overwhelming darkness. We wondered whether it was Salvador our musical monk seeking fresh inspiration as he climbed nearer heaven.

As we passed out of the arches we came upon our funny little monk, who, having ended all his duties, was going to his night's rest. He caught sight of us and gave a brisk skip.

"Welcome to Montserrat," he cried once more. "I am delighted to see you." From long habit he evidently used the form unconsciously: it was his peculiar way of saluting. "You are about to retire, señor. Let me conduct you to your rooms. I should like to see you comfortably settled for the night."

From his tone and manner he might have been taking us to fairyland; to beds of rose-leaves; a palace fitted up with gold and silver, where jewels threw out magic rays upon a perfumed atmosphere. He swung back the great gates of the hospederia. We passed into an atmosphere dark and chilling and certainly not perfumed. Mysterious echoes died away in distant passages. The little monk lighted a lantern that stood ready in the corridor, and weird shadows immediately danced about. One's flesh began to creep, hair to stand on end. In this huge building of 1000 rooms we were to spend a solitary night. It was appalling. As the monk led the way passages and staircases seemed endless: a labyrinth of bricks and mortar. Should we survive it: or, surviving, find a way out of it again?

At last our rooms. Small candles were lighted that made darkness visible. We should manage to see the outline of the ghosts that appeared and no more. The little monk skipped away, wishing us pleasant dreams. Pleasant dreams! Never but once before—and



GIPSY ENCAMPMENT.

that in the fair island of Majorca—did we spend such a night of weird experiences. If we fell asleep for a moment our dreams were troubled. We awoke with a start, feeling that the very thinnest veil separated us from the unseen. The corridors were full of mysterious sounds: our own particular room was full of sighs. Ghostly hands seemed to pass within an inch of our face, freezing us with an icy cold wind that never came from Arctic regions. Once we were persuaded an unearthly form stood near us; to this day we think it. We were wide awake, and when we sat up it was still there. The form of a monk in cloak and cowl. A strange phosphoric light seemed to emanate from it, making it distinctly visible. The face was pale and sad and hopeless. Large dark eyes were full of an agony of sorrow and disappointment. It was evidently the ghost of a monk who had repented his vows and learned too late that even a convent cell cannot bring peace to the soul. A strange thrill passed through us as we gazed, yet of fear or terrors we felt nothing. The sadness and beauty of the face held us spell-bound. We found courage to address it. "Spirit of the dead and gone," we cried, "wherefore art thou come? Why wander in this unrest? Can we do aught to ease thee of thy burden? Will our earthly prayers and sympathy avail thee in thy land of shadows?"

No doubt there was a slight suspicion of rhythm in the words that would have become H. C. rather than our more sober temperament; but they came of their own accord, and we did not wait to turn them into better prose. We listened and longed for a reply, but none came. Nothing but a deep-drawn sigh more expressive of sorrow than all the words that ever were coined. The singular part of it was that whilst the apparition was visible, all the mysterious sounds and echoes in the passages ceased, and began again when it disappeared.

As disappear it did. No word was spoken; no sign was made. For one instant a mad thought had passed through our brain that perhaps it was about to conduct us to some buried treasure: some Aladdin's lamp, whose possession should make us richer than Solomon, more powerful than the kings of the earth. But the strange light grew faint, the outlines shadowy, until all faded into thin air. The room was once more empty; and we held no treasure. It was a long and troubled night. Rest we had none. Yet next morning H. C.—whose poetical temperament should have made him susceptible to all these influences—informed us that he had slept the dreamless sleep of the just. He had heard and seen nothing. This seemed unfair, and was not an equal division of labour.

Before daylight we were up and ready for our pilgrimage. It required some courage to turn out, for the world was still wrapped in Egyptian darkness. In the east as yet there was not the faintest glimmer of dawn. In the house itself a ghostly silence still reigned. Apparently throughout the little settlement not a soul was stirring.

Nevertheless it was the end of the night, and before we were ready to sally forth, there were evidences of a waking world. We went down through the dark passages carrying a light, which flickered and flared and threw around its weird shadows.

We opened the door and passed out into the clear, cold morning. The stars still shone in the dark blue sky. Through the gloom, passing out of the quadrangle, we discerned a mysterious figure approaching: a cowed monk with silent footstep. It was Salvador, true to his word.

"We are both punctual," he said, as he joined us. "I think the morning will be all we could desire."

It had been arranged that breakfast should be ready at the restaurant. Salvador had refused to dine with us, he did not refuse breakfast. The meal was taken by candle-light and he added much to the romance of the scene as he threw back his cowl, his well-formed head and pale, refined face gaining softness and beauty in the subdued artificial light. Salvador had the square forehead of the musician, but the eyes and mouth showed a certain weakness of purpose, betraying a man easily influenced by those he cared for, or by a stronger will than his own. Perhaps, after all, he had done wisely to withdraw from temptation.

This morning his monkish reticence fell from him; he came out of his shell, and proved himself an agreeable companion with a great power to charm. Once more, for a short time, he seemed to become a man of the world.

"You make me feel as though I had come back to life," he said. "It is wonderful how our nature clings to us. I thought myself a monk, dead to all past thoughts and influences; I looked upon my old life as a dream: and here at the first touch I feel as though I could throw aside vows and breviary and cowl and follow you out into the world. Well for me perhaps that I have not the choice given me. Why did you not leave me yesterday to my solitude and devotions, and pass on, as others have done? You are the first who ever stopped and spoke. To-day I feel almost as though I were longing once more for the pleasures of the world."

We knew it was only a momentary reaction. He had the musician's highly nervous and sensitive organisation. Our meeting had awakened long dormant chords, memories of the past; but the effect would soon cease, and he would go back to his monkish life and world of melody, all the better and stronger for the momentary break in the monotony of his daily round.

We did not linger over breakfast. At the door a mule stood ready saddled. This also went with us, in case of need. H. C. and the monk were capable of all physical endurance. Like Don Quixote they would have fought with windmills or slain their Goliaths. Nature had been less kindly to us; and the mule was a necessary precaution.

It would be difficult to describe that glorious morning. When we

first started our path was still shrouded in darkness. We carried lighted lanterns, and Miguel, following behind with the mule, looked a very weird and picturesque object as he threw his gleams and shadows around. Our path wound round the mountain, ever ascending. One by one the stars were going in; in the far east the faintest glimmer was creeping above the horizon. This gradually spread until darkness fled away and light broke. We were high up approaching St. Michael's chapel when the sun rose and the sky suddenly seemed filled with glory.

It was a scene beyond imagination. The vast world below us was shrouded in white mist. Under the influence of the sun this gradually rolled away, curling about the mountain in every fantastic shape and form, and finally disappearing like a great sea being swept from the earth. The whole vast plain lay before us. Towns and villages unveiled themselves as it were by magic. Across the plains, the Pyrenees rose in their flowing undulations, their snow-caps standing out against the blue sky. The course of the winding river might be traced by the thin line of vapour that still hung over it like a white shroud. The whole Catalonian world, all the sea coast from Gerona to Tarragona, came into view, with the blue waters of the Mediterranean sleeping in the sunshine. In the far-off distance we thought we discerned our lovely and beloved Majorca, and were afterwards told that this was quite possible.

All about us were deep, shuddering crevices, into which one scarcely gazed for horror. Immense boulders jutted out on every hand; some of them seeming ready to fall, and, falling, shake the earth to its centre. Wild and barren rocks gave foothold to trees and wild undergrowth more beautiful than the most cultivated garden. Nothing could be lovelier than the ferns and wildflowers that abounded.

As the sun rose higher, warmth and brilliancy increased until the air was full of light. We breathed a magic atmosphere.

"This is what I glory and revel in," cried Salvador the monk. "This lifts me out of myself. It makes me feel a new being with one foot on earth and one in heaven. Can you wonder that I should like to inhabit yonder cave? Day by day I should watch the sun rise and the sun set, and all the hours between would be given to happiness and contemplation. As I look on at these effects of nature my soul seems to go out in a great apocalypse of melody. The air is filled with celestial music. Yet no doubt our Principal is right, and in the end the influence would not be good for me. I am a strange contradiction. There are moments when I feel that I could go back to the world and take my place and play my part in all its rush and excitement: other moments when I could welcome the solitude of the desert, the repose of the grave."

It was almost impossible to turn away from this matchless scene, undoubtedly one of the great panoramas of the world. Here indeed



VALLEY OF MONTERRAT.

we seemed to gaze upon all its kingdoms and glories. Without the least desire to become hermits, we would willingly have spent days upon the mountain. As that could not be we presently commenced our long descent, winding about the mountain paths, gathering specimens of rare wildflowers, and gazing upon the world below. We made many a halt, and rested in many a friendly and verdant nook, and took in many an impression never to be forgotten. On returning to the settlement, we felt we had been to a new world where angels walked unseen. It was difficult to come back to the lower levels of life. We had quite an affection for our patient mule, that looked at us out of its gentle eyes as if it knew quite well that the service rendered was as freely given as it was inestimable.

Salvador joined us at luncheon: we would not be denied.

"It is a fast-day," he said; "how can I turn it into a feast?"

"You are a traveller," we replied; "and as such are permitted an indulgence."

He smiled. "It is true," he returned. "I perceive that you know something of our rules." Nevertheless he was abstemious almost to fasting at table. "And yet it has been indeed a feast compared with my daily food," he said when it was over. "Now would you like to go into the church and have some music? My soul is full of the melody I heard on the mountain."

So it happened that presently we were listening to such strains as we never shall hear again. Once more we were lifted to paradise. The melody was more heavenly than earthly. Again his very soul seemed passing out in music. Had he gone on for many hours we should never have moved. But it came to an end, and silence fell, and presently we had to say farewell.

"I cannot say it," he cried in a voice slightly tremulous. "It has been a day of days to me, never to be repeated. Another glimpse of the world, and a final taking leave thereof. I will never again repeat this experience—unless you return and once more ask me to guide you up Mons Serratus."

This was very improbable, and he knew it. He grasped our hand in silence; he essayed to speak, but the farewell words died unuttered. Then he silently turned, drew up his cowl and left us for ever. We watched him disappear within the shadows of the church; we heard a distant door closed, and knew that in a moment he would have regained the solitude of his cell.

We went back to the world. As we crossed the quadrangle the little lay brother who had first received us caught sight of and skipped towards us.

"Welcome to Montserrat. I am most happy to see you," he cried. "So you have been to the top of the mountain to see the sun rise. And our good Salvador has been your guide. He is lucky to get so many indulgences, but he deserves them. What would the school do without him?—lose half its pupils. And what would the

convent do without the school?—starve. Did you sleep comfortably in your beautiful rooms?"

We thought it hardly worth while to relate our ghostly visitations, and left him with the impression that we had slept the undisturbed sleep of the just.

"And now you are going back to Barcelona," he said. "Well, there is nothing more to be seen. After looking upon the beautiful black Virgin and sunrise from St. Michael's Chapel, you may depart in peace."

And in peace we departed when the time came, wondering whether we should ever again look upon this little world and listen to the divine harmonies of Salvador the Monk of Montserrat.



# WITH FAITHFUL HEART.

*(From the Spanish.)*

NAUGHT of thy mind I know,  
But, for my part,  
Thee do I truly love  
With faithful heart.

And never other so  
My soul hath shared;  
For thee alone I'll care,  
For thee have cared.  
Happy first meeting, whence  
Life's joy-springs start.  
Then gave I thee myself  
With faithful heart.

I am thy very own,  
Love, in good sooth;  
Ne'er in thine inmost heart  
Doubt thou my truth.  
All that I have is thine,  
Each power and part  
I have surrendered thee  
With faithful heart.

Through all the changing years,  
For evermore,  
Thee will I truly love,  
Serve and adore;  
For of all else to me  
Dearest thou art,  
Thus have I chosen thee  
With faithful heart.

## THE COMING AND THE GOING OF MR. WICKS.

BY C. J. KIRKBY FENTON.

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### I.

#### THE COMING.

"SYLVIA, dear, the arrival of Mr. Wicks bids fair to amuse me more than I anticipated. As soon as Jack comes in I am going to mystify him and make him guess who Mr. Wicks is and all about him. It will be delightful to see him puzzled, and I don't think he is likely to find out, unless, of course, a certain little chatter-box tells him."

The speaker, Miss Matilda Cherryton, a round-faced, smiling old lady, who seemed to find life very smooth and pleasant, looked across the luncheon-table at her charge, a pretty girl of seventeen whose father, her only relation, was absent in India.

To make mysteries out of everyday occurrences was a little weakness of Miss Cherryton's, and the present opportunity seemed to her too good to be lost.

"Do you think Mr. Wicks will have changed much?" asked Sylvia. "But of course he won't! It's only a month since I last saw him. It seemed so much longer."

"Do you find it so very dull, Sylvia, in this rambling old place?" asked Miss Cherryton anxiously.

"No, no; how thoughtless of me to have made you think that! Why, it's delightful here, and I am perfectly happy."

And Sylvia laughed—a joyous little laugh.

"What time does Mr. Wicks come, Miss Cherryton?" she presently asked.

"At five o'clock, just in time for tea. But here comes Jack, and I give you full leave, Sylvia, to puzzle him about Mr. Wicks to your heart's content."

Jack strolled into luncheon full of apologies and golf records, and after he had expatiated for a considerable time on the virtues of his clubs and the condition of the ground, Miss Cherryton broached the subject of Mr. Wicks.

"Sylvia has a friend coming here," she began; "he is also a friend of mine and I think you will like him."

"Who is he?" asked Jack, not feeling particularly pleased to hear of this friend.

"He is a Mr. Wicks," replied Miss Cherryton. "And," added Sylvia, "he is extremely amusing."

Jack became thoughtful at this moment, and looked out of the window, and presently said :

"What is he like, aunt, and what does he do to be so amusing? I don't remember the name at all."

"You mustn't be too inquisitive, Jack ; but this much I will tell you—he is young and handsome."

"Oh, indeed : young, handsome, and extremely amusing ; what an enviable young man !" and Jack's lip curled slightly.

"Miss Cherryton and I were going to meet him at the station," said Sylvia, blushing a little—Jack noticed the blush—"but after all we are going to stay at home. You know Mr. Wicks is rather an important personage, and Miss Cherryton thought she would rather be here to receive him."

"Does he hunt, play golf, or shoot ?" asked Jack, hoping that these accomplishments did not belong to Mr. Wicks.

"None of them," replied Sylvia, with a gay little shake of her head. "He has lived in town most of his life, but he is quite clever enough to have learned them all," and Sylvia blushed again.

Jack began quite to dislike this unknown Mr. Wicks. It was an unreasoning indescribable antipathy, but it existed nevertheless ; and during the rest of luncheon he was very silent and monosyllabic.

But Miss Cherryton and Sylvia kept up a lively conversation between themselves.

"Jack, I've addressed you twice ; where are your thoughts, my dear boy."

"I do believe he was thinking of Mr. Wicks," suggested Sylvia.

"Exactly," said Jack, waking from his reverie with a start.

"I asked you if it would be safe to let James fetch my jewels from the bank," continued Miss Cherryton.

"Perfectly," replied Jack, and then asking to be excused left the table.

Miss Cherryton was disappointed. She would have liked Jack to have asked a host of questions about Mr. Wicks.

"Jack, Jack !" she called after him, "you've not asked where Mr. Wicks lives."

Jack turned round, tugged at his moustache, and said "No, aunt," then said something beneath his breath, and striding out of the house he sought refuge at the golf links.

He drew out from his golf-bag the heaviest *driver* he possessed and drove the ball as it had never been drove before ; he vented all his ill-feeling upon that ball, and between the hits burst out into short sentences :

"Wicks—what a name ! Why didn't Aunt Matilda tell me more ! Pooh, can't play golf ; handsome, don't believe it !" and again the ball shot across the fields.

"Now I'll go home," he exclaimed almost savagely, "and see this fellow Wicks!"

He was just passing the stables when there was a sound of carriage wheels and a clatter of hoofs, and then the dog-cart dashed round the corner into the stable-yard at a hand gallop, and the horse finding itself at home, stopped as suddenly as it had arrived, causing sparks to fly from the cobble stones, the dogs from their kennels, and the grooms from the stables. There was a general uproar.

But the dog-cart was quite empty.

It is the unexpected that always takes place, and Jack was so completely surprised at seeing no figures in the carriage that he stared again at the empty seats, but he saw only the two blue cushions bobbing up and down as the terrified horse—with a couple of grooms at her head—plunged from side to side.

Then Jack grasped the situation.

"By Jove, both thrown out, or mare bolted at the station?" Running across the yard he jumped into the dog-cart, seized the reins, and drove rapidly along the road to the station. While he spun along he kept wondering to himself what had happened; what he should find on the road; how he should find this stranger, Mr. Wicks; would he be safe at the station? would he be lying injured by the roadside or—or would he be dead? As this last horrible conjecture flashed across Jack's mind, he recalled his wish of only an hour ago, that Mr. Wicks might never come to the house. At the thought he drew up the horse with a sudden jerk, then shook the reins, and with a stern face drove faster than before.

It was a lonely road, and for some distance Jack drove without seeing a soul; then at a sharp turn of the road he suddenly came upon James—the coachman—sitting on a heap of stones.

At first Jack felt inclined to laugh. The effect of the man, in his long light brown livery coat, seated on the top of a heap of stones, and mopping his head with a red handkerchief, bordered on the ludicrous; but almost at the same time he saw that it was indeed no laughing matter, for blood was flowing from a deep gash in the man's forehead.

"The box has gone, sir, you've been robbed!" said James faintly.

"What box?" asked Jack, jumping down from the dog-cart; "but never mind the box now, we'll tie this handkerchief round your head and get you home."

"It's the box from the bank, sir," continued James.

Jack gave a long whistle of astonishment. All his aunt's jewels gone at one swoop; but he said nothing and tied a second handkerchief round James's head. For the moment he had quite forgotten Mr. Wicks.

"Now see if you can get into the dog-cart; take hold of my arm. That's it." Then he asked, "But what happened to Mr. Wicks?"

No answer.

"You know, the gentleman you had to meet?"

Still no answer, for James had fainted.

Jack was up on the box-seat like a shot. He unloosened the man's collar, there was no time to think of Mr. Wicks or thieves. He whipped up the mare, and the dust rose up in clouds behind them.

Passing through the air so rapidly brought James gradually back to consciousness, but so feeble was his condition that Jack refrained from asking questions. He drove straight into the stables, saw the unfortunate James well cared for, sent a message for the doctor, and then, turning to the coachman, asked again the question :

"What happened to Mr. Wicks?"

James thought for a moment, then :

"He was in the dog-cart when the mare bolted, and the tramp didn't get hold of him."

Then Jack ran to the house, hoping that Mr. Wicks had arrived.

At the front door Miss Cherryton and Sylvia met him.

"Where is Mr. Wicks?" they both cried in the same breath.

"That's what I want to know," replied Jack. "Mr. Wicks has disappeared; there has been a chapter of accidents consisting of robbery, injury, and mystery. All your jewels have been stolen, aunt, that's the robbery. James has been badly hurt by the thieves; and Mr. Wicks has disappeared."

Miss Cherryton was ruffled out of her complacency into saying :

"This is most unfortunate. James ought not to have gone. There never was a time when he didn't bungle; but I do trust nothing serious has happened to Mr. Wicks."

"I hope not, indeed," said Sylvia. "What a dreadful afternoon this has been! Can't we do something? Mr. Wicks may be hurt, and it seems so wrong to be standing here doing nothing," she spoke impetuously and gazed along the avenue of trees that led to the house.

Jack noticed all Sylvia's movements; and her great anxiety for Mr. Wicks' safety aroused all the bitter feelings he had experienced when told of Mr. Wicks' coming, and there was just a shade of coldness in his voice when he said :

"I am going to walk into the town to make inquiries, and I hope to goodness that we shall find Mr. Wicks safe and sound somewhere."

All this time Sylvia had been leaning against the door post with her hands behind her back; but at this moment she suddenly ran forward, with a little cry of joy.

"Oh, Mr. Wicks, my sweet little Mr. Wicks, you are safe after all!"

Very slowly, and with extreme dignity, a small fox terrier walked, beneath the tall trees, towards the house; with head erect he looked

from side to side, but no sooner did he hear Sylvia's voice, that well-known voice, than his whole attitude changed in the twinkling of an eye. His ears sank down flat, his little stump of a tail wagged frantically; he gave one sharp delighted bark, and then flew towards Sylvia, and positively wriggled with glee.

"Well, Mr. Wicks, here you are at last!" cried Sylvia, taking the puppy up in her arms and caressing him. "You've grown a little, I think," she remarked thoughtfully, "and you are just as beautiful as ever; but, dear Mr. Wicks, how *did* you get here all alone, without the carriage?"

And Mr. Wicks tried hard to explain, in his own peculiar way, all about his strange journey.

Jack gave a deep sigh of relief. So *this* was Mr. Wicks.

"Now, Mr. Cherryton, you *must* acknowledge that all we said was true. Isn't he handsome? And he proves himself clever to have found his way here"—and Sylvia looked up at Jack with large wide-open blue eyes.

"You and my aunt will both be glad to hear that I have been completely taken in," said Jack, laughing; he was so delighted to find that Mr. Wicks was not a man that he felt pleased with everybody and everything, "and," he continued, "I think Mr. Wicks is perfectly beautiful!"

"There, do you hear that, Mr. Wicks?" said Sylvia.

Mr. Wicks evidently saw that Jack was speaking of him, and he wrinkled up his little nose, no doubt to acknowledge the compliment.

"Don't you admire his lovely dark eyes?" asked Sylvia.

"Very much indeed," was the reply; but Jack was thinking that he infinitely preferred blue.

"Have you ever beaten him, Miss Druce?" There was a slight twinkle in Jack's eye,

"Beaten him? Of course not! I have brought him up by kindness; when he's naughty, I talk to him seriously and caress him."

Lucky dog, thought Jack, and he did not again refer to beatings.

Then he hurried away towards the town to report the robbery of his aunt's jewels to the police.

The following day Mr. Wicks was missing.

He had risen early before breakfast and had been enjoying all by himself the delights of amateur poaching. He never remembered having such fun before; he had chased cats in town but never rabbits: and now as he returned home panting and with his tongue hanging out, he suddenly saw, just in front of him, little brown things running among the grass—these were Jack's young pheasants.

Mr. Wicks stood still with ears erect; then there—and there—and there, and in a moment six little corpses lay in the grass, and it was at this juncture that Mr. Wicks was discovered.

Jack looked sorrowfully at his dead pheasants that he had so

carefully nurtured and fed upon eggs and other luxuries, then wrathfully at their destroyer.

"Come here!" cried Jack, who was really angry. "Come here, sir!"

Mr. Wicks rolled over on his back and looked up pathetically with his great brown eyes. This attitude of penitence had always touched Sylvia's heart, but to his horror it had no softening effect upon Jack, for he was seized by the scruff of the neck and flogged—flogged until he howled at this untoward treatment. Sylvia—also in search for Mr. Wicks—heard his cries and arrived on the scene just in time to see the chastisement.

"Mr. Cherryton—Mr. Cherryton! How dare you?" she cried in a choking voice. "Oh, my sweet Mr. Wicks, what *have* you been doing?" Then, turning to Jack, "How could you beat him? How could you be so cruel? You should have asked my leave first"—and, with the most charming little pout imaginable, she picked up Mr. Wicks, tucked him under her arm, and walked sedately back to the house.

Jack followed humbly.

"I'm most awfully sorry, Miss Druce," he began.

"Poor Mr. Wicks!" said Sylvia, hardly noticing the apology. "I could hear his cries a mile off."

"A mile, Miss Druce?"

"Yes—quite a mile," maintained Sylvia, not caring how much she exaggerated on Mr. Wicks' behalf.

"Won't you allow me to carry him?" asked Jack. "He's not very light."

"No, thank you," Sylvia answered, with a very decided lift of her chin.

Then Jack turned away and went back to his pheasants.

"The coming of Mr. Wicks," he said sadly, in a voice that was full of despondency, "has been a huge mistake. Sylvia hates me for beating him, and I—well, I am the most wretched of mortals."

## II.

### THE GOING.

MISS CHERRYTON took the loss of her jewels more calmly than most people would have done, probably because it was her nature to take events quietly and comfortably, just as they came. She also had implicit faith in the police and never doubted the speedy recovery of the jewels.

But, strange to say, she seemed really concerned about the loss of her pheasants. She said repeatedly to Jack, "How very provoking!" and at last made up her mind that Mr. Wicks ought to go back.

Now the truth of the matter was that Miss Cherryton disliked dogs extremely—she was afraid of them, and it was only on account of her great fondness for Sylvia that, in a weak moment, she had allowed Mr. Wicks to be sent for; and the death of the pheasants gave her a tolerably good excuse for Mr. Wicks' dismissal.

"Miss Druce will be dreadfully disappointed," pleaded Jack, who saw in his aunt's decision an opportunity for making some atonement to Sylvia for having punished Mr. Wicks. "There is, I believe, a great deal of truth in the proverb 'Love me love my dog,'" he said consolingly to himself.

"Sylvia dear," said Miss Cherryton, a little later, "I am afraid Mr. Wicks is too young to be here, and—and I am sorry to say that I think it would perhaps be better if he went back."

"Oh, Miss Cherryton!" exclaimed Sylvia, opening her blue eyes wide with astonishment. "I am sorry if he has been troublesome, but I thought you liked him a little, and he does love the country so! Won't you let him stay—just a little longer?"

"My dear, such pretty pleadings ought to soften my heart, but mine is a hard heart."

"Look here, aunt, I'll guarantee that Mr. Wicks eats no more pheasants. I will take him under my special care, if Miss Druce will allow me. I'll lick him into shape—no, no, I mean caress him till he becomes the best, most obedient, tractable, delightful dog in the world. You positively mustn't refuse, aunt; think how Miss Druce will miss Mr. Wicks!"

"And how Mr. Wicks will miss Miss Druce," added Sylvia.

"And," continued Jack, "though he has devoured young pheasants, we shall all miss him."

But Miss Cherryton shook her head and remained firm through all these arguments.

"Never mind, Miss Druce," said Jack cheerfully, after Aunt Matilda had left the room. "I'll try again; Mr. Wicks mustn't be banished if we can help it."

"Thank you," said Sylvia demurely. "Mr. Wicks will be grateful."

"And now, Mr. Cherryton, if you have really nothing better to do, come and give me another golf lesson."

Jack ran into the hall and seized his golf-bag, saying that it was the *best* thing he could do.

"Not quite," retorted Sylvia, laughing. "The very best thing that you could do would be to persuade your aunt to let dear Mr. Wicks stay."

"And so I will!" exclaimed Jack with great earnestness.

"How serious," said Sylvia, glancing quickly at him; and then there was a pattering of feet and panting behind them. It was Mr. Wicks.

"How nice! we shall have an audience. Mr. Wicks has come

to look on," said Sylvia, holding out her *cleek* for the dog to jump over.

But Jack thought differently. "I'm afraid we shall find it quite impossible to play if he does look on," he suggested.

"And why?"

"Oh, because he'll stand behind you just when you're going to hit, or come in front and get killed, and many other things."

"Very well," said Sylvia, with a shade of annoyance in her voice. "Rather than that Mr. Wicks should lose his walk I'll give up golf; and please, Mr. Cherryton, will you take my clubs back to the house? Thank you."

And at that moment Jack felt that he positively hated Mr. Wicks.

"Come along, Mr. Wicks, dear," cried Sylvia gaily.

Jack said never a word, but stood standing, staring after Sylvia as she walked away with Mr. Wicks by her side, and his old enemy—jealousy—raged within him.

Two or three days passed by. Sylvia seemed just as devoted as ever to her dog, and Jack became more and more gloomy and silent.

"Mr. Wicks must really go to-morrow," said Miss Cherryton, looking at her morose nephew. "My dear Jack, for goodness sake say something—do something!" she cried, jumping up and bustling about the room. "But don't sit there so solemn and sphinx-like."

"Send him away, aunt, send the dog away. But what am I saying? Keep him, I mean—oh, keep him! Miss Druce is so devoted to him." And Jack flung himself out of the room.

"Well," laughed Miss Cherryton, "young men are strange creatures, especially when they are in love. Nevertheless, I shall send the puppy away."

Jack strolled out of the house in the cool of the evening. In his state of mind the rooms seemed oppressively hot. Again and again he asked himself if Sylvia cared for him, but he could find no answer, and the tall trees waving their branches in the night breezes seemed to sigh in sympathy with him.

He walked slowly across the soft velvety lawn, and out of the garden into the long grass of the park. He looked up at the starlit heavens and at the faint pink light just above the horizon, but the silent beauty of the evening made him the more sad.

"No; it's quite clear—as clear as daylight—she doesn't care for me one scrap. It's Mr. Wicks she likes!" exclaimed Jack out loud. "All her time is devoted to that dog, all her thoughts are for him, and I—well, I'm simply the cruel brute that beat her dear dog. Oh, Sylvia, Sylvia, would that I had never seen you."

At this moment there was a sharp little bark of delight, a rustling in the grass, and Mr. Wicks came dancing at Jack's side.

"Go home," cried Jack, pointing to the house. "Go home ; what are you doing out here ?"

Most dogs would have slunk away with their tails between their legs ; but Mr. Wicks looked up solemnly at Jack and almost seemed to speak the words "Why are you angry with me ?" then he held up a little paw, as if to ask forgiveness, and a stump of a tail wagged pleadingly.

"Jack looked down at the dog, took the proffered paw, and stroked the silky head. Then he walked on silently, and Mr. Wicks trotted contentedly by his side. And the moon rose, making the shadows darker and the open fields lighter.

Presently, without any apparent reason, Mr. Wicks began to growl.

Close by, on a slight rising of the ground, were three old oaks, veterans, gnarled and weather-beaten. Towards these Mr. Wicks trotted slowly, then he stopped, put his head on one side, listened, and growled again ; and scampering towards one of the oaks barked furiously.

Jack whistled, but Mr. Wicks seemed engrossed in gazing up into the tree.

Then a strange thing happened. The branches of the old oak were pushed roughly to one side, and a man leaping down from the tree, looked rapidly round him, and ran with might and main across the open ground. Like the wind Mr. Wicks, followed by Jack, was after him, had reached him, and then there was a yell of pain, for Mr. Wicks had used his weapons with good effect. With a volley of oaths and curses, the tramp dropped a square parcel he had been carrying, and then, the stick that he held in his other hand fell with a heavy thud ; and with just the faintest little cry, Mr. Wicks relaxed his hold and rolled over on his back.

The burglar ran for his life.

Jack knelt down at Mr. Wicks' side, called the dog by his name—the recovery of the jewels seemed nothing to him now. Mr. Wicks opened his eyes slowly, and very feebly he tried to lick Jack's hand. There was a world of understanding in those glorious eyes ; then the light flashed out from them, and Mr. Wicks' merry brief life was over.

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Two figures were walking slowly towards the three old oaks. The twilight was deepening, there was the same pink glow on the horizon, and the same soft breezes whispering among the trees, as on that evening when Jack had walked alone, jealous and miserable. But now there was a change.

"Yes, Jack," murmured Sylvia, "I was very fond of my dear, heroic little Mr. Wicks, but all the time——"

"Yes, and all the time ?" asked Jack eagerly, while he drew nearer.

"I loved far, far better——"

And the three old oaks caught the words "Mr. Jack."

## STORIES OF ANIMALS.

BY LINDON MEADOWS.

## I.—GARDEN PARTIES.

MY unfortunate peas! The birds were eating far more than we consumed at table. I had no objection to their having a share, but to be plundered in this wholesale way was rather too bad.

"Put some white thread or thin string crosswise over the rows," suggested a gardener's almanack; and I did so, with little or no effect. The sparrows even alighted upon it and performed antics like rope-dancers. "Fix some long feathers in corks close by, so that they will revolve in the wind," said another horticultural authority. The enemy gazed in awe for full an hour from adjacent apple-trees, exchanging occasional disparaging remarks, and then set to work again with renewed audacity. "Clap a black bottle on a pole, neck downwards," proposed a local newspaper. There was a momentary panic; but while I was engaged in my third bottle, an enterprising sparrow jumped on one of those already arranged, eyed it all over contemptuously, pronounced it humbug, cleared out a neighbouring pod or two of my "Champions," and giving the signal to his confederates, who were waiting near, that all was safe, proceeded in the work of devastation.

"I will get a gun," said I, "and lie in ambush."

The host of depredators now kept warily off till they saw me walk in to dinner, then commenced anew. Besides, who was to be up and playing Indian at three o'clock in the morning? to say nothing of frightening nervous cottage wives out of their wits by the unexpected bombardment. "Poisoned wheat" was the next idea, but soon abandoned, as I did not wish to kill off the thrushes and blackbirds, whose melodious songs were more acceptable to me than the finest dish of green peas in the world. "Buy fifty yards of netting." This procured me a temporary immunity from the havoc that was going on; but the marauding party contrived to insinuate themselves under the edges of the net, or pulled my property with angry violence through the meshes, and I saw that this plan of defence, too, was very far from proving a success.

The next experiment was with a live cat tied to a stake, a recipe that appeared to be impossible of failure. This startling phenomenon frightened all the sparrows and other birds for exactly half a day, but they gradually recovered their spirits and courage, and gathered quietly around just out of springing distance, calculating that to a nicety.

There were eighty or a hundred of them settled upon the sticks and shelling out the peas with insulting coolness, their remarks to one another meantime being evidently of a jocular nature, not unmingled with sarcasm and ridicule. The length of poor Thomas's whiskers and claws was commented upon in lively chirps, the colour of his fur, the cock of his ears, the green glare of his eyes, and lastly, as a closing stricture, the attenuated proportions of his tail. Thus goaded to madness, Grimalkin, with one savage bound, snapped his tether, and scampered off to the house with the appendage flying out at full length behind him. *Nota bene*.—Siege from this time raised as hopeless, and sparrows left undisputed masters of the field.

Thus much for my ill-fated peas; and as for the raspberries, red currants, and luscious yellow gooseberries, they, of course, shared a similar fate. Quarts upon quarts of the last-named were found every morning emptied clean out from the bottom by the blackbirds and thrushes, who must have blown into the skins afterwards to give them all the appearance of fully-developed fruit. The insolent laugh of the male blackbird, too, as he fluttered off along the ground was highly irritating; but there was no cure, and I bore the robbery like a philosopher, taking good care to pick everything as fast as the sun ripened it.

But what, after all, were my grievances compared with those of my kind old friend the rector of a neighbouring parish? We will call him the Rev. C. W. He had a number of splendidly-bearing cherry trees, and there was every prospect of an abundant harvest. He promised me a basket of black-hearts when the time came, and I was looking forward to it with particular pride and joy.

"But what about the birds?" asked I, with an air of ungenerous suspicion.

"Oh, they will take a few of them, of course," he replied cheerfully.

Towards the middle of July a solitary starling had been observed perched on the top of each of the trees, looking complacently about, feathering himself at intervals, and whistling popular airs. These visits were repeated about once or twice a week. Then the Rev. C. W. made a gratifying mental estimate of the quantity of the forthcoming crop, and agreed with his gardener that the cherries should all be picked (the day being fine) on the morrow. On the morrow, however, on going expectantly out after breakfast with a ladder and suitable receptacles, scarcely one of the cherished black-hearts was to be seen, and the ground under the trees was absolutely white with cherry-stones—they lay in heaps around, and wore the appearance of a picturesque sort of gravel prepared for distribution about the walks. A great chirping and cheeping and whistling had been heard by the Rev. C. W. and family towards four o'clock A.M., accompanied by peals of rollicking bird-laughter and choking sounds as of some delicacy being partaken of with gluttonous haste and relish, but no one guessed what obliging piece of pleasantry was being enacted

hard by. A countryman, however, stated that on proceeding to his work early that day he had seen a cloud of birds, covering a fair part of the heavens, gradually moving off towards the west, and there is little doubt that this was the high-spirited army of bold depredators on their flight homeward after the demolition of the cherry crop. Rochefoucauld, it will be remembered, says that we take a private delight in the misfortunes of our neighbours. I beg to differ from him here. Having no cherries of my own, I had lived in pleasing anticipation of the promised basket, and was proportionately disappointed on being informed in pathetic tones of what had happened.

But birds, though troublesome and destructive enough, are not the only enemies one has to contend with in a garden. There are the field-mice—or whatever their aliases may be—who burrow under and eat the newly-sown beans and peas. There are the wire-worms, rightly so-called, for they are as tough as wire and almost unkillable. There are the ants, who are less harmful, perhaps, here than among the bulbs in the borders and beds. And, lastly, there are the slugs. What is soot, what is paraffin, what is powdered glass to prevent their incursions and depredations? I saw a small brown slug make his way easily among the soot, only stop to sneeze once or twice at the paraffin, and get along very comfortably over a pulverised wine-bottle to eat the outer skin of a tender shoot of creeper and devour a budding vegetable marrow. After all said and done, however, there are worse ills in life than those of which we are speaking, and we will say no more at present on the subject of our outdoor losses and aggravations.

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## II.—A NIGHT ALARM AT SEA.

It was a beautiful moonlight night; our vessel was becalmed, and I had not long retired to my state room, as it was complimentarily called (an apartment about the size of three coffins placed one upon another), after pacing the deck for an hour with the captain. I had undressed myself, scrambled upon my shelf, and was just about to fall into one of those agreeable salt-water slumbers that smooth seas and a gentle rocking motion serve to lap one in, when I heard a sudden stamping of feet overhead, and a minute afterwards a hurried knocking at my cabin door.

"What's the matter?" I naturally asked of the frightened tar who presented himself.

"Oh, lor', sir! please to come on deck as quickly as you can."

"Is the ship going down?"

"No, sir, not that."

"Is she on fire?"

"No, sir, no ; oh, pray lose no time."

"Are we boarded by pirates ?"

"No, no, much worse, sir."

"Have the men mutinied ?"

"No ; please, sir, come at once"—and seeing that my friend Jack was in a terrible state of alarm, and unable to explain himself clearly, I huddled on the first things I could lay my hands on—a pea-jacket and sou'-wester (a costume which could scarcely be viewed as full evening dress)—and snatching a brace of pistols as a precautionary measure, followed him up the companion-ladder to the deck.

There was a pretty scene here ! The captain, the two mates, and a number of the crew were standing just abaft the mainmast, with faces as white as the moonbeams that played over them. A few were down on their knees, praying lustily ; five or six more were scampering up the rigging to take refuge in the tops, while others were in tears and embracing like men about to die ; but the moment I made my appearance, a group gathered around, and held me tightly by the arms and head.

"Oh lor' ! what shall we do ?" was the general cry.

"Do ? Why, let go my head, to begin with, you cowardly lubbers. What on earth—no, on water—is the meaning of all this hubbub ?"

"Don't you hear it, sir ?"

"Hear what ?"

"There ! there it is again !"

I listened, and certainly the sounds that saluted my ear, in the otherwise stillness of night, were a little startling, and like nothing I had ever met with before ; now resembling the roll of distant thunder ; now the growl of a grizzly bear ; now soft and sweet as an *Æolian* harp ; now like a rush of water suddenly escaping through a narrow fissure ; now like an infant being hushed to sleep ; and, anon, like the dulcet upper notes of some splendid operatic singer.

"Do you think it's a mermaid, sir ?" asked the chief mate, Mr. Tongs.

"Humph ! no ; I should say not, as far as my humble experience goes."

"Or a' angel a-callin' of us ?" suggested another.

"It's the last day, sir, I know it is," cried an old seaman, blubbing heartily, as he joined the party on their knees, who were going through the Litany.

"Avast there, my lads ; none of that !" cried the captain. "They are going to break into the spirit-room !" he whispered to me hoarsely.

I saw the danger of an attempt like this, and springing to the companion, pistol in hand, said calmly : "The first man who sets foot on this ladder dies. Wait, and all will soon be satisfactorily explained."

"We are doomed men," muttered another old salt. "I've sailed the seas, man and boy, for fifty years, and never heard anything like

it before." Here the whole orchestra of sublime and mysterious music began afresh.

"Tom Battersea," I said to a tall, fierce-looking sailor, who I knew was devoted to me, for I had bound up an ugly wound for him once or twice, "take my place; and if anyone attempts to go below, shoot him at once." This was merely a little oratorical flourish, but it produced a good effect.

"Ay, ay, sir," was the quick reply; "and I'm just in the mood to shoot somebody—I wouldn't care if it was my own grandfather."

Handing him over one of my pistols, I ran to the bows, whence the strange sounds appeared to proceed. Nothing there but the blue water and some luminous jelly-fish. I looked over the starboard quarter; then to the main-chains, and, jumping nimbly back, sat down on the small carronade that was kept for signalling, and indulged in a hearty fit of mirth.

"Is this a time to be laughing, sir?" demanded the captain, solemnly.

"He'd laugh if the ship was a wreck and all hands gone to the bottom," grumbled Tongs, who disliked me because I kept him, when I could, from bullying and kicking the crew. "Hark again! Oh lor'! oh lor'!"

Just then the captain's black cat, Felix, with his whiskers on end, and his back-bristles raised to a prodigious height, leaped over the bulwarks and on to the deck among the pious party who were at prayers. Every man of them sprang to his feet and took to his heels; some jumped into the rigging; some into the longboat amidships, and covered themselves with the tarpaulin; one or two into the cook's caboose; the rest down the fore-scuttle, and I saw their heads poked up presently to learn the probable extent of the danger. The captain was the first to recover himself, and finding that he had been hoaxed by a villainous tom-cat, and his manhood called in question, began to bluster about and use some very exceptional language; then ordered all hands to go below but the watch.

"A pack of cowardly curs!" cried Tongs, declaring that he would rope's-end half-a-dozen of them to-morrow.

"He ought to have three dozen himself," said Mr. Major, the second mate, aside, and with a wink at me. *He* was always my staunch friend.

"Avast a bit!" interrupted I, calling them back—they looked heartily ashamed—"suppose we splice the main brace, after all our alarm and escape from so imminent a danger! Steward! fetch up a couple of those black bottles from the locker in my cabin, with the water-can, and some glasses. Captain, if you hadn't been cool and collected, mischief must certainly have come of it. Tongs, you are a gallant fellow. Major, I shall speak to the owners respecting your speedy promotion; step aft, my lads, all but the teetotallers. Shall we drink to the Queen?—no, here's to our friend Felix!"

"Oh, belay that!" said the captain, hanging his head—and he refreshed himself quickly to stifle further remorse.

"Felix be—drowned!" said Tongs, emptying his flagon and smacking his lips.

"It's not the first time we've heard a mermaid sing, eh, mate?" joked Mr. Major, as he gave his brother officer a nudge. "Hold! steward, this liquor is quite good enough without any improvement from that water-can of yours!"

"Thank you, sir, and good-night!" cried the crew—and all but the watch retired cheerfully to their respective quarters.

They say that cats have nine lives, but Felix must have been blessed with a considerable number more. Though a favourite with the captain, he was hated by the officers and crew. Tongs had three times thrown him overboard; Major had fractured his skull with a marline-spike; the carpenter had brained him with an axe; the steward had broken his back with a rolling-pin; the cook had upset a kettle of scalding soup over him; and, lastly, Felix had been put into a basket (with some rather objectionable language) and transferred to another vessel; but upon arriving at Quebec and spending two or three nights in parading the streets and tin house-roofs, he came to the conclusion that Canadian toms and tabbies were beneath his notice, and that they even made love and caterwauled in French, and for his part he would none of them. As his only resource, therefore, he established himself secretly in the fore-scuttle of a homeward-bound brig, reached Liverpool in safety, and, scouring along the line of docks, betook himself to his old quarters again on board the *G—*. The sailors said he was the devil, and it would be well, perhaps, to make a friend of him in consideration of future squalls and misadventures.

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### III.—PUSCHKIN.

THERE was a Russian poet of the same name who was of an equally combative disposition, and fell, I believe, in a duel; but the subject of the present memoir was not in any way related to him, nor, indeed, was he even a fellow-countryman, *our* Puschkin being of Persian extraction and descended from an illustrious family; in fact, no other than the Puschkins of—well, no matter now. He was an animal of powerful physique, long whiskers, and irascible temper, but of great originality of character and an intelligence far beyond that of any of his contemporaries. To his bellicose proclivities first, and any amiable weaknesses he may have possessed afterwards.

Puschkin must have been born under the fiery planet Mars, for he was always fighting or contemplating a fight. There was a neigh-

bouring grimalkin, a black-and-white tom (we will, for the sake of distinction, call him "Sayers," as he inherited that worthy's pugilistic tastes), who, for a time, disputed the sovereignty of the surrounding feline population, but Puschkin met him in a memorable pitched battle, fought out in front of my study window, wherein Tom Sayers was signally defeated, and from which he retired with the loss of one ear, a portion of his right cheek, and no less than two-and-a-quarter ounces avoirdupois of fur—for I gathered it up carefully afterwards from the gravel walk, and weighed it on the butter scale. Sayers but seldom presented himself within hail after this humbling lesson, and if he did, Puschkin was down upon him with a sudden charge that sent the clods flying into the air, like the *débris* ejected from the crater of Vesuvius during a violent eruption.

But Puschkin's martial soul was not content with the mere tackling of brother cats; he had an ugly trick of leaping suddenly upon a dog—no matter how tall and savage—at a point just behind the neck, where he could not be shaken off; and of frightening his victim almost to death. I have seen him bait a ferocious collie in this way, and but for my prompt interference the animal would have lost the sight of both eyes, together with a considerable amount of his personal beauty. There were few curs of high or low degree who had the courage to face Puschkin, and when they did summon the requisite audacity, the appalling apparition of his humped back, protruding claws, glaring optics, swollen tail, and the malign expression of countenance called up for the occasion, seldom failed in effecting a hasty and ignominious stampede.

Then, with regard to mice, I have seen Puschkin catch four (this is no rash or random statement) in rapid succession, on the removal of a flour-tub in the pantry, or a dish-cover in the larder, and play with them afterwards as a juggler does with his brass balls, clapping a sudden paw, however, on each and all upon their attempting to stray beyond the prescribed bounds; while Puschkin would now and then feign to have forgotten that they were there, turning his back treacherously and beginning to wash his face; then pouncing upon the whole party, and swallowing them at a gulp, their plaintive shrieks being plainly heard as they passed, one after the other, down his capacious throat. A matchless mouser was Puschkin.

Thus much of the hero and the gladiator; and now to the more amiable traits that I have alluded to. In an evening, the campaigns of the day having been brought to a successful close, Puschkin would sit upright in one corner of an easy chair, rest his head against the cushion, and cross his hind legs one over the other (I had not seen a cat do this before) in a comfortable attitude like an elderly gentleman after reading his daily paper and in the calm enjoyment of his forty winks. But Puschkin's extreme conscientiousness formed, perhaps, one of the most beautiful features in his character, contrasting strangely with his usual warlike air and predatory habits. There was

nothing mean or paltry about him ; he had a soul above theft ; he was never known to covet or purloin ; he might be left within easy reach of a brace of roasting partridges, and never dream of appropriating so much as a single drop of the dripping-gravy. Nay, once, when another Thomas (to be hereinafter mentioned) seized upon a floured mutton chop that lay on the kitchen dresser, Puschkin leaped forward and not only compelled his whiskered friend to drop his ill-gotten prize, but inflicted severe corporal punishment for the offence ; such a nice perception of *Meum* and *Tuum* had Puschkin, and so stern an administrator of justice was he in a case that called for prompt redress and public example.

There is no rule, however, it is said, without an exception, and, wishing to figure as a faithful historian and biographer, I feel bound to record one solitary instance in which Puschkin's uprightness and integrity suffered a sudden collapse. I have spoken of another cat (our establishment boasting of two) called "Sindbad," not on account of his aquatic exploits, for there was no water near (saving that contained in the rectory pump) ; but what he lacked of his illustrious namesake's enterprising spirit by sea he amply atoned for on land—to wit, by a periodical scour over half the county. Sindbad was one day regaling himself upon a devilled leg of chicken (pardon the mention), when Puschkin, catching a whiff of the aroma, and desirous of a closer acquaintance, resolved in his mind the readiest mode of obtaining possession of the dainty. Reflecting that so highly-peppered a dish might provoke an appetite of thirst in his comrade, he went to another corner of the room and imitated a cat in the act of lapping milk. In an instant, off flew Sindbad to refresh himself at this cruel mirage, and away scampered Puschkin triumphantly with the bone. I am inclined to believe, though, that this was, after all, less a breach of honesty and good faith on his part than the fair reprisal for some underhand trick that Sindbad had played him, and for which he was anxious to redeem his reputation by an early and appropriate *coup d'état*.

Let me not forget to mention Puschkin's great sensitiveness to discordant sounds (he had a fine ear for music, judging from his vocal performances on summer nights) and his irritability at their frequent repetition. He once sprang from the rug where he had been dozing and soundly cuffed a child for crying ; and on another occasion, when an elderly invalid lady was taken with a serious fit of coughing, Puschkin jumped suddenly upon her lap, and actually gave her a smart box on the ear.

There is another charming little anecdote, by the bye, connected with our hero, that I am not disposed to overlook. I had often seen him standing in an erect position sharpening his claws—as cats are wont to do—upon the stems of my young fruit trees. This was an injurious habit, and I corrected him sharply for its indulgence. Mark his exceeding ingenuity. There was a matronly female named

Barber, who visited my house now and then in the capacity of char-woman, and instead of repeating the obnoxious process upon my trees, Puschkin took the opportunity, when Mrs. B. was stooping with her back towards him, scouring pots and kettles, of resetting his talons upon those portions of her woollen stockings that were situated about six inches above the ankle, nor did the good woman appear to be in any way conscious of the new and agreeable service to which they were being adapted.

We are told that even crocodiles shed tears, and in proof of the statement, were one needed, I confess that I wept when the day came for Puschkin and myself to part—for part we did. The truth is, his combativeness increasing with his years, he (and we) were in perpetual hot water. If a strange tom-cat set foot anywhere within a hundred yards of the territory over which Puschkin deemed it his right and prerogative to reign as absolute monarch, he would be down upon him with the rapidity of a flash of forked lightning, and, heavens! how the fur would fly! But he at last nearly found his match in a dirty-faced, mustard-coloured, wall-eyed wretch, half as large again as himself. They met once or twice a week at some convenient spot, and fought till neither could stand, and then rolled over and over again in a furious death-grapple. From these brotherly bouts, Puschkin would return with his organs of vision painfully bleared, and a flap of torn scalp hanging down in front of his face, like the piece of rag with which farmers are wont to adorn the countenance of a dangerous bull that has a trick of running at foot-passengers. Forbearance has its limits, and at length, provoked at these uncalled-for encounters, and tired of seeing him so frequent a disgrace to the rectory house and grounds, I sent Puschkin off in a basket to another parish, where he died, fighting fiercely to the last with a stout farm mastiff who had challenged him to single combat, and led the way quietly to an adjacent barnyard, with the view of avoiding interruption and having it out comfortably.

I was affected at the news of my old favourite's death, and caused a neat slab, bearing the following inscription to be placed over his remains—

“TO THE MEMORY OF  
PUSCHKIN,  
KING OF CATS.

This stone is erected by a friend and admirer.”

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## PILGRIMS OF THE NIGHT.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## SORROW.



It was the middle of July, and Joscelyne said that they had got to the heart of the summer. A warm, rich heart it was, and she nestled close to it in these bright days.

Zillah, the brown mare, was on the best of terms with her mistress. When Lord Brackenhill came down to the Beeches, he was often to be seen riding by Joscelyne's side, and it was on horseback that she first found out what a good fellow he was. Something more than a good fellow. A man who

had travelled, and thought, and read, and who could talk seriously as well as lightly.

Lady Audrey had been entertaining a good deal in London, and was glad to rest. The nearest neighbours lived two miles away, and the rector was a bachelor who had coached Lord Brackenhill at Oxford. So Joscelyne, left very much to her own resources, revelled in the books sent down from Mudie's, and did most of her reading out of doors. But the daily ride was never omitted, and Brackenhill was showing her the best bits of scenery.

So July ended, as it had begun, in glorious sunshine; August came, and passed away; and September set in with the crack of guns in the old woods. Lord Brackenhill went out every day with the keepers, and Joscelyne took her morning ride alone.

She was followed by Ryce, a young groom, who had been engaged in town. Lady Audrey was pleased with the Ryces, and had taken them under her wing at once. The groom's mother, a widow, was a capable laundress, and the family had found a home in a little cottage close to the Beeches. Joscelyne had seen them sometimes in her walks; there was something attractive, she thought, in Mrs. Ryce's gentle face.

The September day was warm and still. As Zillah cantered along a bridle-path through the woods, her hoofs made only a soft thud upon the grassy way. The light was golden-green, scarcely a leaf

rustled, and the path had all the quietness of a cathedral aisle. Joscelyne, as she rode on with this dreamy light about her, began to recall fragments of legend and song. She thought of Sir Galahad, riding all alone between dark forest stems to seek the Holy Grail; and then of "the lovely lady, Christabel" in the haunted woods at night. With these thoughts came a sudden remembrance of Wilderwood, and of the grey shape, which must have been either a wraith or a dream.

She was riding through those woods which skirted the grounds of the old hall. There must be more than one approach to the house, and she began to wonder if this bridle-path, so dim and still, led up to some entrance now disused. In all her rides with Lord Brackenhill she had never passed Wilderwood, nor had he spoken of the place. In his mind it was for ever associated with death and sorrow, and no one who knew his story would have felt surprised at his avoidance of the mansion. He always took up his quarters at the Beeches when he came to North Hants, and kept two or three rooms entirely for his own use. Lady Audrey had once remarked that the Beeches had been built after the death of the young countess and her child. It occupied the site of the old dower-house which had been small and inconvenient, and had fallen into decay.

On went Zillah, keeping up an even pace, and the groom came, more slowly, in the rear. The trees grew thickly on each side; tall plumes of bracken showed a touch of yellow here and there, and the brown carpet of old leaves filled up every opening between the roots of ash and oak. Other paths, narrow, and thick with rank grass, went branching away to right and left; but Joscelyne followed the broadest way. Some traces of wheels and hoofs could be seen, and there were deep marks of wood-cutters' feet.

There was a slight turn, and then a glimpse of grey walls and quaint windows. A little thrill of excitement set her heart beating faster, and at the same instant Zillah quickened her pace. She made a bound forward as they neared the end of the long alley, and came out of the wood into a moss-grown gravel drive. Another moment, and Joscelyne saw that they were approaching the old stone archway of the stable-yard.

Suddenly—without a sound—a grey figure darted out of the archway, and came towards the mare, waving a cloudy veil or scarf in its shadowy hands. A wild, white face peered out of some drapery wound about the head. As it drew nearer, making strange gestures, Joscelyne gave a cry of terror. Zillah reared violently; the groom, alarmed by the cry, galloped up, just in time to see his mistress flung from the saddle. The mare, riderless, went thundering through the arch, and the grey figure vanished.

Ryce's shout for help brought two or three persons hurrying out of the house. They gathered round the girl's figure, lying fearfully still on a flower-bed, under some laurels. Some one murmured that it was a

mercy she had not fallen on the hard ground—there was a gleam of comfort in that thought.

One afternoon Joscelyne awoke from a long sleep, and saw a nurse sitting at her bedside.

The nurse rose, and came to her at once; and then she began to wonder vaguely whether she had been lying there for years. Her hours had seemed eternally the same, save for the alternation of pain and rest. She had lost all count of time.

Lady Audrey, looking old and careworn, came to the other side of the bed. The girl recognised her with a faint smile, and spoke.

"Have I been here very long?" she asked.

She knew now that she was in her own room at the Beeches; but at first the effort to remember what had happened was too great for her strength. Abigail, who was watching, saw the look of terror and bewilderment in her eyes.

"All is well now, Miss Joscelyne," she said.

There was a cheerful ring in the familiar voice which re-assured the patient. She made a feeble attempt to grasp the old servant's hand.

But, as the days went on, and she rallied faster, the details of her last terrible ride came back. The nurse, who read her mind, called Abigail, and gave directions. Joscelyne's questions were to be answered frankly and briefly; all mystery must be cleared up. It would comfort her to hear the details of the accident from Abigail; and the woman's tact might be safely relied on.

"Abby," said the weak voice, "I saw the ghost again. It frightened Zillah, and I fell."

"It was not a ghost, Miss Joscelyne. I know all about her. She is a very poor, crazy lady who lives at Wilderwood Hall."

"Are you sure? Will they ever let her loose again?"

"No; she will do no more mischief, poor soul. She is going to her rest, thank God."

"Then she is dying, Abby."

"Yes. She has been wasting and wasting for years; and after frightening you she was stricken with fever. Her poor life will be ended very soon."

"Abby, who was she? Why was she kept there?"

"Another time, Miss Joscelyne, I will tell you more; but you have heard enough for to-day."

Weeks came and went, and Joscelyne's face had lost its look of pain. She was as beautiful as ever, there were no bruises on the delicate brow or cheek. Not a bone had been broken, the soft earth had received her, deadening the violence of the fall. How was it then, that the dainty limbs were so powerless? How was it that she could neither walk nor stand?

They were all very slow in accepting the hideous truth. Paralysis.

When the doctors uttered the word under their breath, Lady Audrey indignantly contradicted them.

But we know how incredulity gives way at last, and slowly changes into resignation.

The winter was over and gone. The spring had come with the scent of violets in its breath, and primroses had lit up the banks and copses with a brief sunshiny beauty. They faded, and the woods were tricked out in all the bravery of new green, and by-and-by the lilac tossed its fragrant plumes in the garden, and the chestnuts opened their pink blossoms among fan-like leaves. Joscelyne loved to be carried out into the world of flowers. Life was still sweet, but its brightness had died, and hope had learnt to clasp hands with submission.

"Joscelyne, what is it? Why has this awful cross been laid on you?"

It was Bennet who asked this question—asked it savagely, crushing the daisies under his feet. He was sitting by her side in a sunny nook, and she lay on a long cane-chair in a mass of soft white wraps and shawls. The rich braids of her pale gold hair was shining in the sun, her lips smiled faintly, but there was sorrow in the dark eyes.

"Why should you be singled out to suffer?" Bennet went on. "Why are you lying helpless here, when those painted wantons, up in London, can move their wicked limbs at will? I hate to think of them! I am sick of this badly-managed world, where the saints are tortured, and the devils have their fling. What made Brackenhill keep a maniac in that cursed old place?"

"They have not told you her story," said Joscelyne, in a quiet voice. "You know that she was the twin sister of the late Countess of Brackenhill? The two girls, Effie and Lily Thorpe, were the earl's earliest playmates. They grew up together, all three; and he loved one, but both loved him."

"It's like a dismal ballad, Joscelyne.

"We were two daughters of one race,  
She was the fairest in the face;  
The wind is blowing in turret and tree."

"Well, Bennet, there is no need to turn it into a ballad. We have ballads enough, old and new, and they are all dismal. There was madness in the blood of the Thorpes, and Lord Brackenhill knew it, but he was very young and wilful, and would have his way. He married Lily, and Effie went out of her mind."

"That was certainly no reason why she should be kept at Wilderwood."

"But she was passionately attached to the place, and the young countess would not part with her. She was not in the least dangerous, poor thing; her madness was of the most harmless kind. When she dressed herself in grey, gauzy things, and called herself the Grey

Ladye, her sister humoured her fancies, and even encouraged them. It was not wise, perhaps; but Lady Brackenhill had a touch of the family wildness, and was not quite like other people."

"Brackenhill must have had a queer household in those days," said Bennet.

"Those days did not last long. His married life ended so soon that it seems to him now like a dream. You have heard how Lady Brackenhill met her death? She was riding home, one winter day, after seeing the hounds meet, and as she rode up to the house her sister sprang out from the evergreens, and startled her horse. She fell, and was fatally injured; but when she lay dying she made her husband promise that he would never send Effie away from Wilderwood."

"It was a promise that ought not to have been kept," said Bennet angrily. "Brackenhill was a fool about those two mad women."

"I don't think he was a fool to let Effie stay there," Joscelyne replied.

"It was a very good place for a harmless lunatic to live in. Nobody went to the hall after the countess died. Lord Brackenhill hated the sight of its walls. How could anyone suppose that I was going to ride there? It is only the unexpected that ever happens, Bennet."

"Still, one has a very natural desire to blame some one, Joscelyne."

"There is no one to blame. As to poor Effie Thorpe, you know she died in October."

"No doubt she will continue to haunt Wilderwood. It ought to be burnt to the ground."

"You had better go and set it on fire. I don't think Lord Brackenhill would prosecute you," said Joscelyne, laughing.

"How cheerfully you accept your fate, Joscelyne! Is there no hopeful sign—so slight hint of returning power? The best of doctors may be false prophets, you know."

"There is no hopeful sign," she answered. "I am like that poor prince in the 'Arabian Nights' who was half flesh and half marble. They say that the fall hurt my spine. I cannot feel when my lower limbs are touched or pinched; nor can I move them in the least degree. The doctors have not pronounced any decided opinion, Bennet. So far as I can understand, they are not sanguine about my recovery—that is all."

His sister's condition was a bitter trial to Bennet. He was rising higher and higher in the literary world, and on the whole he wore his laurels gracefully enough.

Perhaps his views were stated a little more plainly in his second book than in the first. He was, or seemed to be, surer of his ground; or, strictly speaking, surer that there was no ground at all. People shook their heads indulgently; but they read his book all the same.

As to Joscelyne, she did not believe in his unbelief. Scepticism, she said, was Bennet's latest mood, and he would use it until he had got tired of it. He had changed since his marriage, and she alone knew the secret causes which had effected this change. But she

knew her brother, and felt that in the long run he might possibly turn back to the very things he now despised, and even draw a new inspiration from that which was old and forsaken.

He had come down to see her when the London season was in its freshest. His love for her was the one feeling which was not subject to fluctuation.

"You don't know how much I have learnt to love this place, Bennet," she said, looking at him with a smile. "There never was such a garden. Everything here has had time to grow and come to perfection: that is why we get such ample shade, and such a wealth of blossoms. The house is new, but the grounds are very old."

"I have never seen such an enchanting old place, Joscelyne."

"The dower-house used to stand here," she went on. "It was quaint and inconvenient, and no one had lived in it for a long time. It was the house intended for the dowager countesses of Brackenhill, you know; a home provided for them when they had to yield their place to their eldest sons' wives. Isn't it a kind fate that has installed me in such an earthly paradise?"

"Dear girl," he said, "you always make the best of everything."

"I think it would break my heart if I had to leave the Beeches," she said.

Bennet looked at her thoughtfully in silence. She had taken up a piece of Indian silk, and was embroidering it, according to a fancy of her own, with richly coloured flowers and scrolls. Her dark eyes were bent over her work as the white fingers deftly plied the needle.

"Joscelyne, have you heard lately from Leila Wooledge?" he asked.

"No; she came to see me at Easter, and moaned over me very much. We kept her here one night. I don't think she wanted to stay any longer."

"She has not written, then?"

"No," Joscelyne repeated, lifting her eyes. "Is there anything to write about? What is it?"

She was looking at him steadily, with the needle in her hand, just drawn out of the silk.

"I thought she might have told you about her brother. Excuse me, Joscelyne, but he is an awful cur. He is going to marry a fat widow ten years older than himself."

In spite of many prearranged sentences, he had blurted out the news after all. Who does not know how hard it is to tell ill tidings in a pleasant fashion? Perhaps the telling hurt him more than the hearing hurt Joscelyne. In some inexplicable way, Leila's flying visit had prepared her for this. Leila had come down from town to see whether her friend's case was as hopeless as had been said. Just as of old, she had given her brother the wisdom of worldly counsel; an unforeseen chance had snatched Joscelyne from him—let him take the best thing that he could get, and go his way.

"I hope he may be happy," said a quiet voice, and the slender white fingers plied the needle again.

"I hope he may be miserable," said Bennet briefly. He saw Lord Brackenhill coming slowly across the lawn, carrying a bundle of newly-arrived journals; and, getting up, he went to meet him.

"What a perfect place this is!" he began. "Here is Joscelyne saying she would break her heart if she had to leave the Beeches?"

"Did she say so?" Brackenhill stopped in his walk, and looked him hard in the face for a moment.

"She did, and she meant it."

"I am going to give her these papers and things," said Lord Brackenhill, walking on again quietly. "She is never tired of reading."

"One can't help hoping," said Bennet in a lower tone. "She looks so exactly like her old self, and she is so cheerful."

A quick look of pain crossed Brackenhill's face.

"It is the cheerfulness that saddens us," he answered. "If she would only complain a little, we might begin to hope."

"There was always a good deal of the saint in her," said Bennet. "Poor girl, I can't see why she doesn't get her fair share of happiness. I should go mad if I thought about it too long."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE HEART'S DESIRE.

THE London season was near its end; all the world was getting tired of the merry-go-round, and longing for a little time to breathe and rest; but some people contrived to hide all traces of weariness. One of these fortunate persons was Leila Woledge. She had been blooming all through the season like a splendid flower, and she was still as brilliant as if she had been newly-taken out of a greenhouse to dazzle the eyes of men.

"I can't think how you manage to preserve your brightness. It is magic," said Bennet Daughton.

There was a large garden-party in the grounds of a house by the river. Leila wore a dainty grey *confection*, artfully touched with heliotrope, and relieved with delicate lace. A large hat, laden with velvet heliotropes and airy bows of chiffon, lightly shaded her face and sun-bright hair. She was sitting in a rustic seat, in a nook that was screened by shrubs and trees, and Bennet lay on the grass at her feet.

Just then she was feeling that there was no reason why she should not enjoy her life to the uttermost. Alban was safely disposed of; he had married his widow early in June, and would be comfortably provided for during the rest of his days. She had several lovers of her own; good substantial lovers, who would make satisfactory

husbands. Leila expressed the warmest approval of the views of the New Woman; but she trod the old path all the while. She meant to marry, and marry well.

But, as she looked down at the man who lay on the grass, she knew that he was the only man she had ever liked *very* much. She could never quite forget the sharp sting of pain that she had suffered when she had heard of his marriage. Of all things, she liked best to be the queen of a genius. And she had known that he was a genius before he had won recognition from the world. She had reigned over his dreams. She felt that he belonged to her alone.

This was why she had let him lure her away from the crowd; it was sweet to sit in this nook by the river, and let herself be adored. It was not prudent, perhaps; but she did not care particularly for anyone who had come to the garden-party. She had accompanied her brother and his wife, and Alban knew that she was quite capable of taking care of herself.

Bennet looked up at her suddenly, his face warm with a rush of strong feeling; his eyes full of light. They were blue-grey eyes, clear and intense; and her heart gave a swift bound when she met their gaze.

"Oh, Leila," he said, "how glad I am that I came here to-day! I came because I thought I should catch a glimpse of you."

"You have had more than a glimpse," she answered, casting down her golden-brown lashes.

Bennet drew a deep breath. "I can never see enough of you," he said passionately. "It's the old story of Endymion, and that baffling goddess of his. But she gave herself to him in the end."

Cool as she generally was, Leila felt herself trembling from head to foot. She plucked a long stalk of millet-grass and drew it slowly through her slender fingers. It was the first confession of his love; but he had told her nothing that she did not already know. The beautiful colouring of her down-bent face enticed him. He drew himself nearer to her feet.

"Leila," he said, "do you know how much I love you?"

She paused for a second, irresolute. "I have guessed it," she replied, in a low voice.

He held his head back and gazed at her again. "And you are not angry?" he said.

"No, I can't be angry. I knew it before you spoke. I have seen myself in your books."

"My whole life is filled with you," he cried; "filled with the dream of you! If you were really mine what splendid things I could do! It is because I cannot grasp you that I fail to utter my very best!"

"I am sorry for you, Bennet," she said softly.

It was the first time she had called him by his Christian name. Uttered in her silvery voice, it seemed to have a charm that it had never possessed before. He trembled with ecstasy, and raised himself to his knees.

"Leila," he said, "be more than sorry. Love me a little; I have always been yours in heart. Give me something in return for all that I lavish upon you."

"I give you many thoughts," she murmured, as he caught her hands. "When I had forgotten everyone else, I have remembered you."

"Then you love me, Leila? Oh, how sweet you are!"

He drew her into his arms, and felt her heart throbbing close to his. But she gently freed herself, still trembling.

"Someone may come here," she whispered. "We may be seen." He gave an impatient sigh.

The nook which sheltered them was at the end of the grounds, which sloped down gradually to the river. It was a half-forgotten spot, overgrown with all the wild flowers of July, and hidden by a thick growth of shrubs and elder-bushes. Still, there was a chance of being suddenly intruded upon by any of the guests who chose to stray from the crowd on the lawn. Their host—a Mr. Merrington—was a new-comer, and had made considerable alterations already in the house and grounds. By-and-by, when other changes had been accomplished, he would turn his attention to this nook, and prune down its wildness. Bennet, who had known the former owner of the place, was disposed to find fault with the fresh man and his doings.

"All the romance has been cleared away," he said. "It's so profoundly new. I used to run down here with Doverill, the artist, and the old gardens were a bit of dreamland then. A little lower down there's Disney's cottage."

He had risen to his feet, and was looking at Leila with an intense, eager look which moved her strangely. She was wrought upon more than she knew; she cared for him more than she had ever realised. He had gained a power over her at last.

"Leila," he said, "why should we not have one happy hour all to ourselves? There's a boat here; the boat-house is just behind those bushes. Let me row you down to Disney's place. It's the sweetest little wilderness you ever saw. There's no one there but his old housekeeper."

For a moment she did not speak. It seemed as if the whole world were waiting to hear her answer. Bennet's heart was throbbing wildly; his face was pale with anxiety.

"Do come," he said, in a passionate whisper.

They floated gently down the full, shining river, not speaking much, but intensely conscious that they were together. The bright, mocking smile, which had so often maddened Bennet, was gone, and in its stead there was a languid sweetness which was as new as it was beautiful. She seemed to desire nothing better than this dreamy silence, and as she sat facing him, with her hat pushed slightly back, he looked at her with that long ardent gaze which read her very soul.

In a little while the boat shot under the drooping boughs of some willows. Bennet helped her to land, and then they walked together along a shadowy garden path. At the far end of the long alley there was a cottage smothered in flowery creepers, but not a single human being was to be seen. As Bennet had said, the place was a wilderness, a sweet maze of summer bloom and leafage, haunted by the hum of bees. The air was heavy with the breath of flowers, and scarcely a murmur of the outer world could reach them here. He put his arm round her and drew her close to his side. They had come to a small arbour with a quaint thatched roof, and he led her in and placed her on the rustic seat. Through a screen of jessamine she could see the clear evening sky, now touched with the first faint shade of gold. It was like a delicious dream; but how long would it last?

Only a little while. Well, she would drink one deep draught of bliss before she went back to her place in the smiling, chattering, sneering crowd. Just for one hour she could fling propriety to the winds, and sit here in this Eden bower with the man of her choice. Some wild thoughts like these drifted through her mind when he took off her hat with gentle hands, and drew her near him on the garden bench. They thought themselves in paradise.

"Leila," he said at last, "in all my life there has never been any joy like this. Tell me if you are happy too? One word."

"Yes," she said softly.

"My darling, why must we ever be parted? Only a little courage, and we may spend our lives together. Tell me that you will trust yourself to me. Do not send me back again into emptiness and darkness. Stay with me, Leila. Be my inspiration, and I shall do greater things than I have ever dreamed of."

"You know it cannot be," she said faintly, as he bent his face to hers.

"Let us go away together to-morrow. I know a place in the New Forest where nobody ever goes. We might stay there for a week or two, and arrange our plans for the future. One thing we can decide at once—that we cannot and will not live without each other."

Was it to this that all her coolness and worldly wisdom had brought her? She had held Alban back when he would have married his true love, and preached a cold sermon on prudence, and the opinion of society. And now, could this be Leila who listened quietly when Dulcie's husband asked her to fly with him?

Yes, it was Leila who had got tired of social successes and wanted something more intense. Her feeling for Bennet Daughton was the most real she had ever known; but she had not dreamt that it would carry her so far as this. Hitherto she had always kept herself well in hand; but she had lost all power of self-guidance when she let him bring her here.

"No," she said, half closing her eyes, "no; we cannot live apart."

Then they both remembered that the dusk was slowly creeping on.

They had lingered too long in their paradise. There was not a minute to be lost.

"Leila," he said, "we must not go back to the Merringtons now. It is too late. I must take you home by train straight away. As we go along, we will lay our plans for to-morrow. We shall get off to-morrow; I will not put off our happiness for a single day."

They left the little arbour, and hurried along the garden paths, brushing off rose-petals, and bowing the heads of carnations as they went. The Wooldges no longer lived in rooms in Kensington. Mrs. Woledge owned a house in Portman Square; and Leila's home was with her brother and his wife.

Before they parted that night, Bennet had won her promise to meet him at six o'clock on the following evening. She was to come to the waiting-room at Waterloo. She was so well accustomed to act without restraint that it would be easy to make excuses to her sister-in-law, and account for this sudden departure.

"Think," he said, as they were parting at her door, "think that this is the last time we shall say the hateful word good-bye. To-morrow will bring us together till the end of all things. Leila, I can conquer the world for your sake!"

When the heavy door had opened and closed, he hurried off and hailed a hansom. The next thing to be done was to drive home, and tell Dulcie that he was suddenly called away.

Dulcie! Up to this moment he had put her altogether in the background.

And yet, if it had not been for her, there would have been no need to run away with the queen of his heart. He might have married Leila openly, at one of the fashionable churches, with a bishop to tie the knot, and a crowd of gay worldlings looking on. Of course he had already persuaded himself that theirs would be a higher, truer union than any bond which the church would bless. But, in spite of all that popular writers, male and female, had written and said, there were still a great many antiquated scruples to be effectually overcome.

As he drove fast through the lighted, crowded streets, he set Leila and Dulcie side by side in his thoughts for a moment. The one had forced him into a legal union, hateful because it was enforced. The other had consented to give herself to him freely, counting the world well lost for true love's sake. At any hour he might leave Leila, and the law would let him go scot free. She knew all this as well as he knew it himself; and yet in her splendid trustfulness she had resolved to leave her fate in his hands. How grand she was! What a future lay before him with such a woman by his side!

Well, they would let society see, at last, that a man and woman could be true to each other without the aid of church and state! United by perfect sympathy and mutual devotion, they could hold their own against the universe. What a pair they would make!

Genius and beauty, such as earth had seldom seen, bound to each other by the inconceivable strength of a tie, unrecognised by a stupid and immoral world!

Still all aglow with this ecstasy, he stopped at his own door in the old square. It was now half-past ten, and there was a good deal to be done before morning. He had decided not to sleep at his lodgings that night, but to get a bed elsewhere.

He found Dulcie alone in the sitting-room as usual, working diligently by the light of her lamp. She was mending a sock of his, and looked up with her peaceful smile as he entered.

It was not possible to imagine Leila sitting alone and mending socks. His clothes would get mended in some ethereal manner, no doubt. Such trifling considerations need not occupy his mind for a moment. When he spoke, his voice sounded so harsh and strange that Dulcie started.

"I am going to make great changes," he began. "I have entered into an engagement which will call me away from town. It will be a long while before I come back."

He paused, and she sat looking at him quietly.

"It will be impossible to take you with me," he went on, speaking in a nervous, excited tone. "You will find a home with your father and mother, and of course I shall send you money. But I shall give up these rooms, and sell most of my things. Doverill—you have seen Doverill—will arrange about the disposal of everything. You will not have any trouble at all."

He had half expected to see a flash of her old spirit. But there was no fire in the limpid brown eyes raised to his. Their gaze was gentle and kind.

"I shall go and pack the few books I want to take," he continued, hurriedly. "And some clothes; but you need not move. I know where to find everything that is necessary."

"Let me help you," she said, rising quietly, and laying her work upon the table. "It is late, and you are looking tired."

"Tired!" he repeated, with increasing irritability. "I never felt fresher in my life. Don't come. I hate to be fussed over, you know."

She sat down again at once, and took up the sock once more. If she had only been doing something else! The sight of those socks lying in her plain work-basket with the needle-book, and pincushion, and cards of yarn, was maddening.

He stood looking at her in silence for a moment, and his face worked painfully. Then he went out of the room, and she heard him going upstairs.

For more than an hour she sat listening and darning, while he moved about in the room overhead. Presently he came down, and she knew that he would call a street-porter to carry his luggage. The man came; the two went up together, and there was a scraping and a

bumping all the way down to the hall-door. Would he not look in on her to say farewell?

Yes; he entered the sitting-room with a five-pound note in his hand, and laid it down upon the table.

"That's for travelling expenses, Dulcie," he said. "You had better go off into the country to-morrow, as early as you can. I have your address, and of course I shall write and send more money. Leave everything here in Doverill's hands. He will know just what he has to do."

How did she know that this was a final parting? By what curious process did she read what was in his mind that night? She knew all, and yet she looked at him with that gaze of tender patience which he could never forget. Even now, at the height of his rapturous expectation, he feared that the look in this woman's brown eyes would haunt him hereafter.

"Good-bye, Dulcie," he said abruptly.

The table was between them. He did not even hold out his hand, nor did he hear her say good-bye. He went out, shut the door, and was gone.

Really gone.

She folded up the socks, and put them back into her work-basket. There were not many things for her to do. Her personal possessions were very few. She had only one trunk to pack—the same trunk which had come with her from her old home. Yes, he had told her to start early to-morrow, and she would obey him.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE DAY AFTER.

WHEN Dulcie went up to her little room that night, she did not weep. She had always known that this time was coming. All through the period of her strange, unnatural married life she had been waiting for the ending. And now that it had come, her sorrow lay too deep to find relief in tears.

She loved Bennet far better than she had ever done in her old passionate days. The lower love had tightened the cords that bound him, and the higher love could not break them. Yet, with unfailing patience, she had done all that she could to atone for having wronged him; and she did not blame him in this bitter hour. A thousand times she had blamed her own wild selfishness, and to-night she was taking all the burden of his sins and errors on herself.

"He loves Leila Wooledge. It is with her he is going away. Oh, that I might die and leave him free! Oh, that I could save them both from trouble, and shame, and scorn!"

Her thoughts flew to Joscelyne, smitten down in her beautiful

youth, and lying paralysed at the Beeches. Surely Bennet had missed his sister's restraining influence! And Dulcie, too, had missed her more than words could tell. It was now more than a year since Joscelyne had come to her lodgings and said good-bye; and the days had seemed darker and sadder after the terrible news of the accident. Dulcie had often longed to go and see her sister-in-law, but she had not ventured to put that longing into words. She had meekly obeyed her husband's unspoken wish, and kept persistently in the background.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." She could frame no better prayer to express her bitter need. It was her old stubborn refusal to utter this cry which had brought about all her sorrow and remorse. And now the deepest desire of her heart was bound up in those simple words. She said them over and over, like a weary child, before she went to sleep.

Her waking the next morning was very sad; but with her usual quietness she set about doing the duties that lay nearest to her hand. She entered the room which her husband had left in wild disorder, and put everything in its right place. When this was done, and all was ready for Mr. Doverill, she turned her attention to her own belongings, and began to pack her trunk.

It was an easy task, and when it was finished the morning was still young. She might call a cab, and catch the eleven o'clock train from Victoria. The journey to her father's new home would take about three hours, and the later trains might be more crowded. Yes, she would go without any leave-takings; but until this moment she had not realised that London had grown very dear to her heart.

She was standing at the open window looking out at the familiar trees in the square, and holding her bunch of keys in her hand. There were some to whom she would fain have said good-bye. The little Warders and their mother; Barnaby Mace, and others who lived in those close streets which she had learnt to know so well. And Christabel Avory. If she could have looked once more into those true eyes, this hasty departure would not have seemed so sad.

A voice called her by name. She turned quickly, and saw the Faith-healer standing at the door.

At the sight of her friend and guide, poor Dulcie's calmness gave way for the first time. Her tears were a relief. She sobbed out her story, leaning on Christabel's shoulder, hiding nothing, telling all that she felt and feared with the utmost simplicity. The faith-healer listened, and soothed her with a gentle touch now and then.

"Oh, Christabel," she sighed, lifting her head at last, "if I could but die to set him free!"

"It may be far better for him that you should live, Dulcie. You cannot tell."

Dulcie dried her tears, and shook her head sadly.

"He can't help wishing that I were dead," she said. "It would be the right thing."

"You don't know right things from wrong things," said Christabel gently. "But let me tell you why I came here this morning. There is something that I want you to do."

"What is it?" Dulcie asked.

"Come and sit with Mary Joliffe while her mother goes to Hampstead Heath for a few hours. Mrs. Joliffe is pining for a breath of fresh air; but she does not like to leave Mary alone. The girl gets well so slowly. You will read to her, and amuse her."

"But I am going away. He said I had better go by an early train."

"What does it matter about the train? Decide to go to-morrow. Indeed, it will be better to send a letter and say that you are coming."

Dulcie hesitated, and then yielded. She was glad to linger over her leave-takings. Christabel and her London friends were her fellow-pilgrims and comrades; they knew more of her life than her father and mother had ever known.

She had washed the traces of tears from her face, and was going out with the faith-healer, when Doverill came in. He looked at Dulcie kindly. Bennet had only told him as much as it was necessary for him to know; but he had partly guessed the rest of the story. This neglected young wife, with the wonderful brown eyes, was an interesting study.

"I shall not leave town till to-morrow," Dulcie said. "I have something to do before I start."

"Very well, Mrs. Daughton. I will send for the books and things early to-morrow. Now I will just run up, and look them all over. Good morning."

He went his way upstairs, thinking what a pity it was that Daughton had not arranged to take his wife away with him. The poor thing had been crying. He was sorry for her, and felt instinctively that she deserved a happier fate. He recalled Bennet's worn face and hurried manner, and wondered whether the hastily-planned journey would not have a dreary ending.

Leila, after she had got upstairs to her own room, had asked herself the same question? The hall door had closed upon Bennet, and the spell of his presence was no longer with her. What had she been doing? What had she promised to do?

Dinner was over, and presently Mrs. Wooledge, fat and amiable, came up to inquire for her sister-in-law.

"Leila, dear, I have been quite concerned," she began. "Alban assured me you would take care of yourself; but he is always so cool, you know. You must have something at once."

"Yes, I had better eat something," Leila replied. "It was a stupid party, Fanny. I felt ill, and went away on the river. But of course I meant to come back much sooner."

"Oh, yes, of course," said the good-natured woman, quite satisfied with this meagre explanation. "Now that I look at you I see you

are rather pale. Put on a tea-gown and rest. Morton shall bring some hot cutlets, and you must have some Burgundy. When you are refreshed I will tell you something which will interest you."

Leila did not in the least believe that Mrs. Woledge could tell her anything interesting. But excitement had left her very tired, and she followed the good creature's counsel with gratitude. When she had flung aside the delicate costume, much tumbled and crushed, and wrapped herself in blue cashmere, she sank into a luxurious chair in her dressing-room. In a few minutes Morton appeared.

While she ate and drank, she wondered if the future would supply her with Burgundy as choice as this? Already she was beginning to doubt the strength of her own resolution. The summer-house in that wild garden had certainly been damp. She gathered the folds of cashmere closely round her, and half believed that she had taken a chill. The wine made her sleepy and comfortable, the sort of comfort which is fatal to romance.

"Are you feeling rested, Leila?" said Mrs. Woledge's voice at the door. "Ah, yes! I see you are better. Alban wants to speak to you for a few minutes."

"Can't he speak to-morrow?" Leila asked.

"Well, I hardly think he can wait. He wants to say something very important."

"Oh, Fanny, you sound mysterious!"

"It is nothing unpleasant, dear; but he says that you must go to him in the study."

Mrs. Woledge's fat face was beaming with pleasure. Leila glanced at her, and felt sure that Alban's important communication must be a very simple matter indeed. She rose at once, and went downstairs.

Her brother looked up at her quickly, and saw that she was weary. He did not trouble her with any questions; but plunged into his subject at once.

"Leila"—he began—"Redwood has been here. He came in, just before dinner, to talk about you."

She knew what was coming next, and the colour rushed to her cheeks. Arthur Redwood, the great millionaire!

"I did not dream of this," she murmured.

"Didn't you? I thought you might have had some hint of his intentions. Sit down, Leila; I never saw you look so tired."

He pulled a large easy chair towards her. His new study was furnished with due attention to comfort; in fact, as his devoted wife explained to everybody, he was about to rest from his labours, and dwell in well-earned repose.

"He will come to-morrow morning to hear your answer," he continued. "I wish you had been better prepared. It is strange that you did not suspect his preference."

"I saw that he admired me," said Leila. "But I thought he meant

to propose to Lady Maud Seacastle. He is just the sort of man to marry a woman with a title."

"He cannot be that sort of man," said Alban gravely. "If he had been, he would have married her. She is as poor as a church mouse. What have you been thinking about? You are not usually so blind."

He spoke very seriously, and fixed his eyes on hers with an expression which was almost severe. She looked down on the floor, and felt small.

"I suppose I had better tell you everything," she said, after a pause. "You noticed, I daresay, that Bennet Daughton was hovering round me yesterday?"

"He was hovering round you before yesterday, Leila."

"Well—he was. I lost my head a little, and entangled myself. In short, I promised to meet him at the waiting-room at Waterloo to-morrow."

Woolledge was silent for a moment. Words could not express his astonishment and indignation. Such folly might have been pardonable in a weak-minded girl; but for Leila there was not the slightest excuse.

"After Daughton's disgraceful marriage——" he was beginning, but she stopped him impatiently.

"I know all that you can say. Bennet is a genius. Geniuses always make fools of themselves and other people. That is how and why it all happened; but you can't understand it. You have no imagination!"

"Thank heaven I have not," he said, in a severe tone.

Her foot beat the ground, and her great blue eyes were very bright. It was humiliating to feel that she and her brother had changed places. She had given him the right to lecture her on her imprudence. In future it would be impossible to take the old high ground on which she had stood so long. Presently he spoke again, with a formality which exasperated her.

"I am waiting to know your decision! Redwood will be here at twelve to-morrow!"

As he spoke, her mind called up a distinct image of Redwood. He was a man of humble birth; his face was round, his eyes were round too. His people had made an enormous fortune out of beer, and one of them had gone to Australia, and heaped up piles of gold. No one could possibly spend Redwood's fortune in a lifetime. If he had wanted to go to the bad, he could hardly have succeeded in doing it; but he had shown no signs of extravagance. His taste was heavily gorgeous; he had been expensively educated without much result, and envious friends were heard to whisper that he was dull. Nevertheless, he was the greatest match of the day—the prince of the plutocrats—and all eyes were turned upon him in the intensity of expectation.

Of course Leila meant to accept him. She had not hesitated for a moment; her silence did not proceed from indecision. But she had to bear a keen pang or two, and she was desperately angry with herself. Why could not the man have spoken a few days ago? If she had only known, how differently she would have acted! As it was, she must appeal to her brother to help her out of her snare. She could trust him implicitly. But, oh, the miserable necessity!

"I decide to marry him," she said. "When he comes I will see him. But, Alban, there is another thing to be thought about."

"You mean your appointment with Daughton?" he said coldly.

"Yes; it was for six to-morrow evening. Will you go to Waterloo and give him a note?"

Woledge reflected. "It is the best thing one can do, I suppose," he said. "But I sincerely hope you will be cautious in writing."

"I will not commit myself. You may be quite sure of that, Alban."

He smiled rather grimly.

"I don't think, Leila, that I shall ever be quite sure of you again."

"We shall see. Time works wonders," she replied, controlling her temper with a strong effort. "Now, Alban, listen. I shall tell Bennet to come straight to this house. Don't raise objections. I know how to deal with him, and I must take the matter into my own hands. The affair must be ended definitely before the day is over."

He looked at her sternly, and she met his gaze, this time, without flinching. She was the old Leila again; cool and strong, and his last doubt vanished.

"We are to dine at the Merles' to-night," she went on. "Arthur Redwood will meet us there. Let Fanny tell everyone of the engagement. The sooner it is known the better."

Woledge drew a long breath. "Let her come in," he said, "she will be delighted."

Mrs. Woledge was admitted, and Leila embraced her with a graceful *abandon* which was very charming.

"You have made us very happy, Leila," said the good creature, effusively. "I wanted to tell you, but Alban insisted on seeing you alone in the study. What wonderful good fortune!"

"Leila had better go upstairs and get a good night," interrupted Alban. "Paleness is not becoming to her. It is a pity that this has been such a tiring day."

When Leila rested her head on the pillow she scarcely hoped for sleep. But it came at last, and then she slumbered soundly till late in the morning. The maid who brought her breakfast-tray gave her a message from her brother, advising her not to rise until it was nearly noon. She asked for a hand-glass, and attentively studied every tint in her fair face. The jaded look had passed away.

There had been no sleep for Bennet all through the hours of that long night. He rose and looked out upon the dim London dawn, veiled in a thin mist of rain. His lips were parched and dry; his limbs ached as if he had come off a wearisome journey. After leaving an early breakfast half untouched, he went out into the streets and made a few purchases. Then he dropped in at his club to glance at the papers and write letters; but it seemed as if the day were never coming to a close.

The leaden-footed hours crawled on. As far as possible he avoided all acquaintances; but one or two met him, and seemed, he thought, to see something unusual in his face. Half past five found him hanging about the doors of the railway waiting-room, watching with feverish eagerness for a tall, graceful figure in a grey travelling-dress.

But it seemed, in those anxious moments, as if every woman had made up her mind, that day, to travel in grey. Stone-grey, blue-grey, silver-grey—they swept past him, tall and short; plump and slender; well-dressed and ill-dressed, until they bewildered his brain.

Some one touched his arm, and he started nervously. Alban Woledge, looking eminently clerical and dignified, was standing before him with a letter in his hand.

"My sister has sent you this note," he said in measured tones. And then he turned away without uttering another word.

Bennet tore the envelope open. His hand trembled, and there was a mist before his eyes.

"Impossible," the writer said. "Come to me without a moment's delay."

There was no signature; the words were written in pencil; surely Leila must be ill! He thrust the note into his breast, called a hansom, and told the driver to go as fast as he could to Portman Square.

He was shown at once into the study, a room he had never seen before. Only a few seconds passed, and then the door opened. There was a soft rustle of creamy silk, a faint perfume of roses, and Leila met him with an outstretched hand. Pale pink roses were on her breast and in her bright hair; she was a lovely apparition of freshness, almost of girlishness, this evening. But Bennet, who had expected to see her languid with illness, was stricken mute with surprise.

"My dear Bennet, I have thought it all over," she began. "And so have you. How mad we have both been! Let us congratulate each other on the return of our senses! Of course we were neither of us really in earnest."

The very walls seemed to reel as he listened to her. The shock was so sudden that he was benumbed.

"Do you mean all this, Leila?" he asked.

"Of course," she said blithely. "Let us sit down, shall we? I wish I had time for a longer talk."

He looked at her, and saw that her cheeks had paled. She was mistress of herself, but her eyes had the intense brilliance of anxiety.

"Listen, Bennet," she went on, seeing that he was about to speak. "We like each other, I know; and yesterday, being in a romantic mood, we magnified our liking until it seemed a stupendous thing."

"Leila," he said sternly, "you are talking trash, and you know it. My love for you is a stupendous thing; it overshadows my whole life. Let us try to be true. You may have changed your mind, but it does not follow that mine is changed too."

"If you really loved me, Bennet, you would not wish to drag me downward," she replied. "Running away is one of those impossible things we neither of us could seriously contemplate for a moment. It was quite bad enough to have lured me into that howling wilderness of a garden without planning anything more foolish. But I don't believe you want to run away. You are only pretending to be angry. You are trying not to show that you are rejoiced at my sensible decision to stay at home!"

She laughed—a laugh that sounded like a little peal of silver bells. His face darkened with a look which was not good to see.

"Come," she said, "we understand each other, and we shall always be great friends. You will hear some news about me very soon. We must have a long, long talk one of these days; but now we have only a minute or two. Dear Bennet, you will think kindly of me always."

Her face was raised to his with a pleading expression, but he answered nothing. Her laugh was ringing in his ears. Not all the storms of life could ever drown the sound of that laugh, he thought bitterly.

"Good-bye," she said sweetly.

He opened the door and was gone. She looked round the room a little wildly when she found herself alone. For an instant her self-control gave way. And then she collected her thoughts with a great effort, and went up to her own room.

*(To be continued.)*



## GENERAL GORGES.



IN the account of the Beresford ghost story, which appeared in the April number of the *ARGOSY*, it is stated that Lady Beresford made a *mésalliance* by her second marriage with General Gorges. I imagine this idea has arisen from a remark in Walford's "Stories of Noble Families," where the "inequality," or "disparity," of the union—I forget which—is spoken of. A few simple facts concerning the position of the family into which Lady Beresford married should correct this impression.

Laying aside the usual starting-point of having come over with William the Conqueror, we find that Ralph de Gorges was made a Baron by writ in 1309 for distinguished service in the French and Scotch wars, and a few years later became Lord-Deputy of Ireland. His descendant, Sir Edmund Gorges, was made Knight of the Bath at the "creation of Prince Arthure and of his Bayne on St. Andrew's Eve, anno quinto of the King" (Henry VII.). He married Lady Anne Howard, who was of royal blood, her father being co-representative of Thomas Plantagenet, Earl of Norfolk. She was grand-aunt to Queen Anne Boleyn and Queen Katherine Howard.

Sir Thomas Gorges was one of Queen Elizabeth's courtiers, and his marriage with one of her maids of honour, the Marchioness of Northampton, is matter of history, having been brought about in the first instance partly by some of Queen Elizabeth's jests at a ball in which the Marchioness and Sir Thomas were partners, and then so fiercely resented by her Majesty in the fashion with which she treated the marriage of any of the ladies of her Court, that she clapped Sir Thomas into the Tower, releasing him, however, in a few days, and presenting him with a Spanish galleon and its treasures to help him in building his splendid manor house, Longford Castle, now possessed by Lord Radnor. It cost £18,000—beside out-buildings—no trifling sum in those days.

Sir Ferdinand Gorges, grand-nephew of Sir Thomas, made his mark on a new page of history by colonising the State of Maine, U.S. Many of the existing leases in Portland are in his name, and the

Gorges Historical Society has been founded there to perpetuate a memory held in such high honour by the State. The fort at the entrance to Portland Harbour is named Fort Gorges.

Sir Arthur Gorges was friend and patron of Edmund Spenser; and as "Alcyon" has been eulogised by the poet, who also composed a very fine piece on the death of Sir Arthur's wife, who was heiress of a wealthy branch of the Howards, and whom Spenser designated as "the Whyte Lyonnesse," in reference to the armorial bearings of her house.

There are many proofs of the importance of the family of Gorges in the South of England, too numerous to mention in full. Sir Thomas Gorges, for instance, though a younger son, was wealthy enough, thanks to royal favour, to dispose of more than a dozen manors by his will. Wraxall, in Somersetshire, Tamerton Foliot, in Devonshire, were among the oldest of the family possessions. Beautiful tombs and brasses in Salisbury Cathedral, Chelsea, Tamerton Foliot, St. Budeaux and elsewhere, still record the names of a race that once ranked with the noblest.

Robert Gorges, who belonged to a younger branch of the English house, came to Ireland as secretary to the Duke of Schomberg in William's reign. His wife was a grand-daughter of Adam Loftus, Archbishop of Dublin (famous in connection with the founding there of Trinity College) and sister to Lord Lisburn. Their son was the General Gorges who married Lady Beresford. As, in addition to equal lineage, the family estates were large, it is difficult to imagine how it can be termed a *mésalliance*; while the other charge of being a bad husband seems disproved by the fact of Lady Beresford bequeathing to him her own very considerable possessions. His second wife was the Countess of Meath.

At the time of the Union, Hamilton Gorges, of Kilbrew, County Meath, then head of the house, was offered an enormous sum to clear his property of debt; also, I believe, the revival of an extinct peerage for his vote in favour of the measure. He, however, would not be bought, and voted against it, much to the detriment of his own interests, but true to his convictions. *Noblesse oblige!*





## THE VANISHED BRIDE.

### A TRUE STORY.

ROWNING the brow of a hill in sunny Provence, and forming a landmark to the country round, there stood, some two hundred years ago, the Château d'Alêts, covering a large area, and, with its massive towers and thick walls, constituting no mean stronghold.

At the period spoken of, the Baron d'Alêts, then in possession, was a vigorous, energetic man, one of the leaders of the Huguenot party, and in that capacity had done good service to the cause.

At the same time he was hard and overbearing towards his dependants, and they occasionally rose against him, and attacked the château.

At such times, though of approved courage, the Baron would retire into hiding, his place of retreat, if known to anyone, being in the faithful keeping of his own special attendant, a deaf mute. He, while allowing the indignant vassals, wild with their wrongs and bent on vengeance, to enter the château and search high and low for his master, would smile as they retired baffled, grumbling that he whom they sought was not within the walls of his fortress.

After allowing sufficient time to elapse for angry feelings to cool down, the Baron would don a helmet of peculiar construction, without which he never appeared at the head of his band, and wind a celebrated horn, wherewith he was wont to summon his vassals for hunt or raid, and things would resume their normal course.

The Baron dying unmarried, the property passed to distant relatives, the family de P—— coming into possession, and it is to be noted that, on the assembling at the château of friends and relatives on the occasion of the Baron's funeral, the celebrated horn and helmet were nowhere to be found, and considerable curiosity was expressed as to what had become of them.

Years passed on, and the Baron had become well-nigh forgotten, save when in stories told by rustic firesides, or in discussing family traditions at the château, mention was made of the bold, brave man, who had once been the terror of the country-side.

His successors led quiet, uneventful lives until we come to the spring of 1725, when we find the château in possession of the

widowed Countess de P——, who, since the death of her husband, had lived in great retirement, devoting herself to the education of her only child Lucie. The latter was a beautiful, lively girl of middle height, with fair hair, and those witching eyes which remind one of a startled fawn.

She was the delight of her mother's heart, and to that mother's great satisfaction was betrothed to the Vicomte de V——, a young man whose position and character seemed to warrant the brightest hopes for their future. The 12th of June, the date fixed for the wedding, having arrived, guests from far and near were gathered at the château to do honour to the bride.

Mademoiselle Lucy looked lovelier than ever in her bridal dress, which was of pale blue silk, with a necklet of diamonds as sole ornament, and by her modest graceful bearing she won the hearts of all who approached her.

After the marriage ceremony there was a considerable interval before the dinner-hour, and when the guests began to tire of strolling about the grounds, Lucie, still scarcely more than a child, proposed a game at hide-and-seek to her young friends. This was quickly agreed to, and was carried on, both indoors and out, by the young people for some time, with great spirit and merriment.

When at length the dinner-bell sounded, the bride was not forthcoming, to the great consternation of the whole party. Further summons by the bell proving ineffectual, search-parties were organised in all directions, but without success.

In anxious suspense the mother and bridegroom tried to glean from their guests when, where, and by whom Lucie had last been seen, but the answers received threw no light on her disappearance. Château, garden, grounds, and an adjacent ravine were then more systematically explored, and the search carried on by relays through the night.

The horror of all, and the agony of the two to whom the missing one was nearest and dearest can be better imagined than described, during the long hours which ended without either tidings or trace.

A theory having been started that the bride might have been carried off by gipsies for the sake of ransom, the bridegroom travelled far and wide, following first one seeming clue, and then another; but days grew into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years, still nothing transpired to throw a ray of light on the fate of the missing Lucie.

The Countess de P——, who was of an old Catholic family, had a marble cross erected in front of the château on the spot where her daughter had last been seen, and prayers and masses were duly offered for the repose of that daughter's soul. At length, unable to bear the painful associations of the château, the Countess took up her abode on a small property which she possessed at some miles distance.

The Vicomte de V——, after mourning his lost bride for many

years, married again, and Lucie, though not forgotten, was rarely spoken of; indeed, the lapse of five and twenty years had almost obliterated the speculations of the country round in regard to the mysterious disappearance of the fair young girl, who had so suddenly vanished from the midst of her loving friends and bright hopes.

In the spring of 1750 the widowed Baroness de R——, with her only son Maurice, a lad of sixteen, came to reside on a property adjoining the Château d'Alêts. This lady, when very young, had married an officer of rank, to whom she was deeply attached, and her grief when he was killed on the field of action was so intense, that she lost her sight from excessive weeping, and her health became permanently injured.

It was only her absorbing love for her boy that enabled her to keep a hold on life, and it was with a view to his health, delicate from rapid growth, that she had moved to the South of France.

For his sake too, in spite of blindness and ill-health, she sought to form acquaintance with some of her neighbours, in order to secure for her son companions suited to his years. She was kindly met and welcomed, and the boy soon made friends with the younger members of the families around, and joined in their amusements.

The Countess de P——, having given him the run of her property, Maurice arranged with his young friends to spend a long day there; and, accordingly, one summer's morning some ten or a dozen lads met at the Château d'Alêts, and after hearing from the old priest, who had the charge of the Memorial Cross, Lucie's tragic story, they wandered about the grounds, and then were permitted by the custodian of the château to go over the building. He, who with his family, occupied a few rooms in the main part of the château, told the boys many stories of its former occupants, and showed them many points of interest, assuring them that though he had lived there for some time, the pile was so extensive, he had not yet explored every part of it. He also observed that rats had grown so numerous it became necessary in self-defence to keep a large number of cats. One cat, in particular, had already attracted the notice of the boys, owing to its having a perfectly white head, while the rest of the body was dark.

On asking the keeper about it, he exclaimed, "Ah, la vieille Farouche!" and then explained that he had found the animal there as a kitten, and that it was one of the wildest and oldest of them all. He added: "We call her *Farouche*, for we have never been able to make friends with her, nor to find out where she goes at night."

Allowed then to wander about the château at will, the boys had resort in the afternoon to a game at hide-and-seek, and when it came to the turn of Maurice and his special friend, Paul, to hide, they arranged that the former should conceal himself within the château, whilst the latter should find a nook outside.

Separating accordingly, Maurice, as he ran up a grand staircase

leading to some of the principal apartments, caught a last glimpse of Paul crossing the courtyard.

The room in which Maurice found himself was large and handsome, with remains of painting and gilding and other traces of past magnificence; the fireplace projected from the wall, and was supported by caryatides.

Maurice, hearing his comrades drawing near, hastily hid in the recess behind the fireplace, intending, if they passed on, to dart out and hide in another room. The voices, however, came nearer, and hearing one say, "I am sure Maurice must be here, I saw him come this way," he pressed closely against the wall, in doing which he felt a slight projection behind him, and on putting his hand to the panel, found it swing noiselessly back. Greatly astonished, he stepped behind, and, gently closing the aperture, found himself in a space about three feet square. As his eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness, he perceived a second door at right angles to that by which he had entered, and visible only when that was closed.

Having discovered the way to open it, he found himself at the top of a flight of steps leading to a room below. Curious to explore further, he descended the steps, letting the door close as he did so, though he had intended to leave it ajar. He was vexed at having let the door shut, though he perceived that this was unavoidable when once he had lost hold of it, as it closed with a spring.

This, however, did not seriously disturb the boy's mind, as he could still hear the voices of his companions, and thought that if he should find himself in any difficulty he had only to shout for help.

On examination he found the room to be of good size, with vaulted roof, stone floor, and massive walls; it seemed to be perfectly dry, though but feebly lighted by slits high up in the wall facing each other. These slits were apparently level with the ground outside, and being narrow, were unlikely to attract the attention of passers-by.

As Maurice's eyes became accustomed to the dim light, he perceived there was a solid oak table and a large arm-chair in the middle of the room, and, hanging on the wall, a curiously ornamented hunting-horn, a helmet, and some other accoutrements.

The old story of the famous Baron d'Alêts flashed across the boy's mind. This then had been his retiring-place, and of course there must be an easy way out.

Presently his eyes fell on what seemed to be a couch at the further end of the room, and on it—why, of course, one of the custodian's daughters! What more natural than that she should come to this cool, quiet room for her siesta? In a few minutes she would wake and show him the way out. Meantime he would not disturb her.

But even while he said this to himself he was aware of a hush—a stillness—a something in the very atmosphere that chilled his blood and filled him with a shivering horror.

Determined, however, not to give way to unmanly fears, he crossed

the room and stood by the couch. A young girl, or, rather what had once been a young girl, lay there in a dress of pale blue silk and with diamonds still encircling the skeleton throat.

In a moment he understood it all; he was in the presence of the lost bride, of the Lucie who had for a quarter of a century been immured in that vaulted chamber. Only that morning he had heard her sad story, and now he stood by her side! How had she come here? Probably like himself—she had accidentally discovered the door behind the caryatides, and had descended the steps from curiosity.

But then, why had she not called for help? Was this to be his end? Oh, horrible thought!

He flew back to the door, and strove in vain to open it; it was so tightly closed that nowhere could he find chink, or handle, or any possible means of moving it. Then he fell to beating and kicking the door with all his young strength, trusting that the noise would be heard, but it was all of no avail.

He could still hear the voices of his companions far away, but though he stood under the apertures in the wall and shouted with all his might, no answer came.

At length he was too much exhausted to make more effort. Daylight waned, his companions had apparently withdrawn, being unable to find him; and poor Maurice, overwhelmed with fear and terror, fainted. When he came to himself darkness reigned, and he could not at first remember where he was, but memory soon recalled the events of the preceding day, and he shuddered anew at the thought of his imprisonment. He was sinking too from want of food, but suddenly remembered he had a good sized piece of bread in his pocket, which he had carried off from the mid-day meal.

This he ate, and then fell into a troubled sleep till the day was breaking.

On opening his eyes, the first thing he saw was a white patch, on which two fiery stars gleamed; and stories he had read or heard of evil spirits rushed into his mind. But in a very few minutes, as the daylight grew stronger, he perceived that the curious white-headed cat was gazing at him, and the gleams that had startled him proceeded from her eyes.

In his relief at finding a living creature near him, he tried to make friends with the cat; but the moment he attempted to touch her, she was off, scaling the wall, and disappearing in a twinkling through one of the apertures. Tears rushed to the boy's eyes as he found himself again alone with the dead. Then followed a day of hopeless misery. Over and over again Maurice heard distant voices, and sometimes they seemed to come quite near, but his own efforts to make himself heard were still unavailing. He found a large Bible on the oak table, and tried to beguile the hours by reading; then, closing the book, and gazing at the cover, his attention was drawn to some faint

marks he found there. Wiping away the dust, he deciphered a few words that the ill-fated Lucie had scratched with a kind of large hair-pin he found near. She seemed soon to have realised the hopelessness of her position, and an agonised farewell, dated June 17th, five days after her marriage, was the last testimony to her terrible fate. The contemplation of this inscription was not calculated to encourage Maurice. Still he strove manfully against despondency, and tried over and over again to force the door, or make his voice to be heard, but in vain. So the day again closed in, and night found him still a prisoner, exhausted with hunger and depressed by fear.

The night was passed in a semi-conscious state, and in the morning he found the old cat Farouche again glaring at him. She soon disappeared as before, and he almost gave way to despair.

Only the influence of a devout mother's teaching and example kept him from this; and upborne by the consciousness that she and others would be praying for his safety, he fell on his knees, imploring deliverance from the terrible fate that seemed to stare him in the face, or, if not deliverance, strength to meet it with the courage of his race.

At times, anxiety on his mother's account superseded every other feeling. He knew well that in her delicate state of health any shock would affect her seriously, and he trembled to think of her sufferings during this protracted suspense. He was well aware that whenever he left her she counted the hours until his return, and welcomed him back with a sigh of relief, and an unspoken thanksgiving.

He was her only treasure, the one object which gave life on earth a value—and now nearly forty-eight hours had passed without her seeing him. The thought of her sorrow was agony to him, and he flung his arms on the table, burying his face there, and crying out in his anguish, "O ma mère, ma mère!"

Happily, perhaps, for the prisoner, a fit of prostration and exhaustion succeeded, and so the day wore away, and the third night came on. This was passed mostly in a state of delirium, and in the morning, when the boy found Farouche again watching him, a sudden thought flashed across his mind, bringing a ray of hope with it.

The cat, being now more accustomed to his presence, did not start at his least movement, and Maurice managed to seize it, and, in spite of its struggles, to hold the animal firmly between his knees while he tied his pocket-handkerchief round its neck. The handkerchief had his initials embroidered on it, and his hope was that the cat might attract attention before it contrived to rid itself of the appendage. The scared animal was off like a shot the moment Maurice released it, and very soon after the poor boy, utterly exhausted, sank on the floor in a fit of unconsciousness.

The cat, meanwhile, wild with fright, rushed through the park, and was soon seen by one of the custodian's sons. His efforts to catch the poor animal only increased its alarm, and it was not until some hours

after that the cat stole into the custodian's house and lay down under a chair. Then one of the custodian's daughters stooped down and untied the handkerchief, and as soon as the initials had been made out the whole family was in a state of excitement and consternation. The great thing now was not to lose sight of the cat, and by watching her closely and following her gently, her wanderings were traced, and eventually she was seen to slip through one of the apertures described.

With some difficulty they contrived to look through the opening, and then could only dimly perceive the outline of a prostrate figure. No time was lost in removing enough of the masonry to allow of a ladder being lowered; then one of the men went down and brought up the all but lifeless youth in his arms, and he was at once conveyed to his home.

For weeks he hovered between life and death, watched over and waited upon with the tenderest care and devotion by his old nurse and his tutor, the Abbé S——

When at length he was sufficiently recovered to begin to ask questions and take notice of what passed around him, he had to learn that he was motherless, the Baroness having sunk under the blow of her son's disappearance.

The news of this terrible bereavement threw back the patient, and several months elapsed before he was to revisit the Château d'Alêts and to explain to the Countess de P—— how he had found his way into the Baron's retreat.

She had, of course, been speedily informed of the discovery of her daughter, and had thus been afforded the sad satisfaction of giving her remains Christian burial.

The Countess caused an entrance to the secret chamber to be made from the outside, and had it converted into a chapel, where masses were said for the repose of the soul of the ill-fated Lucie. Thither Maurice repaired from time to time, to offer thanksgivings for a life so nearly lost, so marvellously saved.

In the year 1793 the château was completely destroyed, but the memory of the old Baron and of the gentle bride is still cherished by those who bear their names, and sometimes recount their story; and it was from a member of the family, now living in the South of France, that the account here given was received.

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